North Carolina Women

Their Lives and Times—Volume 1

EDITED BY MICHELE GILLESPIE AND SALLY G. McMILLEN

Annie Lowrie Alexander Arizona Nick Swayney Blankenship Samantha Biddix Bumgarner
Mary Bayard Clarke Anna Julia Cooper Sallie Southall Cotten
Sarah Cowan "Daisy" Denson The Edenton Ladies Catherine Devereux Edmondston
Rose O'Neal Greenhow Harriet and Louisa Jacobs Alice Morgan Person
Sarah Dudley Pettey Sister Anna Mary L. Martin Sloop Cornelia Phillips Spencer
Elizabeth Maxwell Steele Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Smith Reynolds

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Michele Gillespie and Sally G. McMillen

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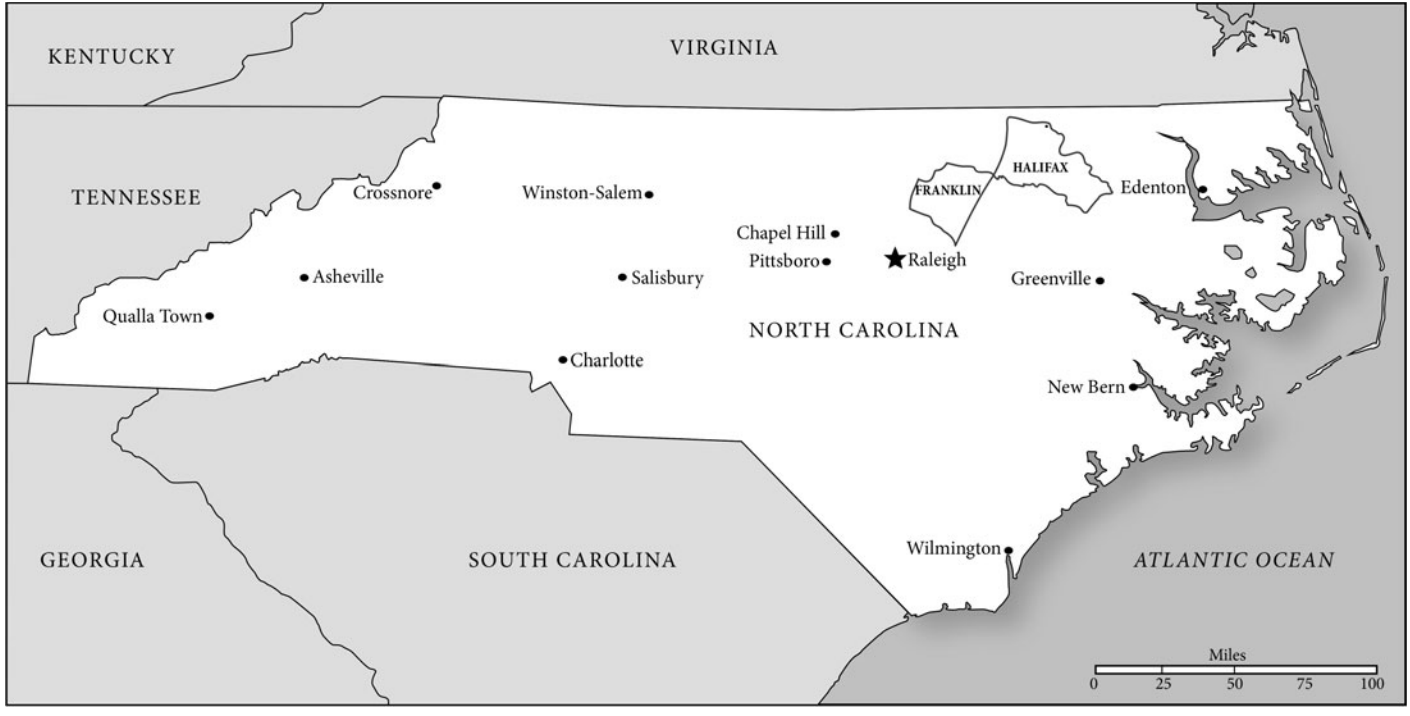
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North Carolina Women

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Introduction

MICHELE GILLESPIE AND SALLY G. MCMILLEN

North Carolina has had more than its share of accomplished, influential women. Many of them quietly—a few noisily—expanded women's sphere of influence or broke through barriers that had long defined and circumscribed women's lives. North Carolina is a curious state, with its three distinct geographies (coast, Piedmont, and mountains), its mixed resources, and its numerous small-scale metropolitan centers. For these reasons and more, it has had its own peculiar and frequently downplayed history, sandwiched between two more braggadocio states, Virginia and South Carolina. Women in North Carolina seem all the more remarkable for living in and influencing a place often dubbed the "Rip Van Winkle state." That nickname has seemed apt, at least until the Civil War, because of the state's underdeveloped, seemingly backward social and political structure and limited cultural and intellectual life. Indeed, dispirited travelers found little reason to linger as they made their way across North Carolina, wondering how to traverse its pine forests, sandy soil, and uninspiring landscape in the east, and its inhospitable mountain ranges to the west, as rapidly as possible.

Nor was North Carolina's early history particularly noteworthy, other than its claiming the short-lived Roanoke Colony. Settled permanently in 1670 by the British as a part of the larger Carolina colony, North Carolina did not become a separate entity until 1729. While the colony was home to some thirty thriving Native American tribes, including Cherokees, Catawbas, Tuscaroras, Enos, and others, warfare and European diseases initially decimated them, although some groups rebounded in time to shape an emergent North Carolina. Yet women made their mark from the earliest settlement, if measured by compensatory history alone. It was in the Roanoke Colony where the first British baby in the mainland American colonies, Virginia Dare, was born in 1587. The first book

published in North Carolina, *Matilda Berkeley; or, Family Anecdotes*, was written by a woman, Winifred Marshall Gales, in 1804.

Women's impact on North Carolina is difficult to find in most state history books. Hugh Lefler and Albert Newsome's 1954 volume mentions women a mere six times in 676 pages. Jeffrey Crow and Larry Tise's 1979 *Writing North Carolina History* volume, a wonderful book in many other ways, references women only eight times. Five years later, Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson's coedited *North Carolina Experience* included a single chapter (out of nineteen) on women, while William Powell's 1989 *North Carolina through Four Centuries* has a single section dedicated to women (on suffrage), in chapter 23. But these books and figures should not overshadow another important reality. Beginning in the 1980s, the North Carolina Museum and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History worked behind the scenes to explore the history of half the state's population. These efforts culminated in many important efforts, including an issue of the *North Carolina Historical Review* devoted to women's history in 1991 and a major exhibition on women's history at the museum in 1994. These significant developments reflected rediscovery of classic texts like Guion Griffis Johnson's *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, published in 1937, which prominently featured women's social history, as well as such newer (and now classic) works as *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (1987), by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and others.

Not so coincidentally, by the end of this last century and into the twenty-first, an exceptional group of researchers has been publishing outstanding women's history scholarship based on North Carolina sources and North Carolina women, including Kirsten Fisher's *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (2002); Jane Turner Censer's *North Carolina Planters and Their Children* (1984), on elite antebellum families; Victoria Bynum's *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (1992), on impoverished, often ill-behaved women in three Piedmont counties; Laura Edwards's *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (1997), on how ideas about men's and women's roles within households shaped conceptions of the public arena; and Glenda Gilmore's *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (1996), on African American women's leadership during the nadir of post–Civil War race relations. These signal works were accompanied by numerous theses, dissertations, and scholarly articles on women's and gender history, all based on North Carolina sources, all fleshing out North Carolina women's lives and North Carolina's changing conceptions of women's roles.

Yet surprisingly, few North Carolina women have been the subjects of full-

length biographies. In 1999 Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Wilson helped fill this void with their invaluable contribution, *North Carolina Women: Making History*, an engaging, comprehensive overview of important women in the state, threaded with absorbing biographical vignettes. Over a decade later, our two-volume collection on North Carolina women springs from this outpouring of new work. Under the skillful hand of our thirty-six authors, the forty some women featured in our project, diverse in time, place, religion, race, class, experience, and ideology, have much to teach us about North Carolina's past as well as about the larger story of women in the South, and indeed, the nation.

Because of North Carolina's unique early history as a somnolent state and the impact this somnolence has had on its women, we have elected to divide our two-volume history of North Carolina women not at the Civil War era, a standard approach in many two-volume American and southern history collections, but instead with the emerging progressive era. Thus, the essays in volume 1 begin with women born across the Atlantic world—in England and Africa—as well as in the American colonies who lived for at least part of their lives in eighteenth-century North Carolina and end with North Carolina women born in the second half of the nineteenth century who came of age in the 1890s and early twentieth century. The essays in volume 2 begin with women born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but who made their greatest contributions to the social, political, cultural, legal, and economic life of the state from the late progressive era through the late twentieth century.

The volumes as a whole illustrate that in many key respects North Carolina women do not differ all that much from their southern sisters. But in significant ways, especially given their experiences in the industrializing Piedmont and in the Appalachian mountains, they differed dramatically. Like other colonies in the Southeast, North Carolina's population gradually increased throughout the eighteenth century, as whites moved down from Virginia, searching for cheap farmland and a place to settle. Others, including the Scotch-Irish, Quakers, and Moravians, followed the wagon road south from Pennsylvania to establish communities in the Piedmont. Slavery spread slowly because lucrative cash crops such as rice, tobacco, and cotton never dominated antebellum North Carolina's economy, having their greatest influence only in the northeastern part of the state. By 1860 slaves constituted a third of the state's population, but remained concentrated in this region.

Like much of the South, and the nation as a whole, North Carolina was rural and agrarian until well into the twentieth century. Only a small percentage of its people lived in towns and cities, which meant the majority of women lived their lives centered on farm, family, and church and rarely became involved in

the larger world of politics and commerce. The state had neither a substantial port nor extensive transportation networks, so North Carolina's yeoman farmers had limited access to the nation's growing market economy. During the Civil War, North Carolina contributed tens of thousands of men to fight for the Confederacy and suffered greater casualties than any other southern state, while women on the home front played a major role and suffered greatly as well. Because little actual fighting took place in North Carolina, the destruction of homes and farms was minimal. Nevertheless, women across the state experienced sustained hardship, exhaustion, and deprivation as they struggled to farm their land in order to feed and clothe their children, as well as the soldiers in Lee's army. Women in the Piedmont organized a bread riot in Salisbury, while women in the mountains confronted roving bands of deserters and guerrilla warfare on top of these other considerable challenges. But while white women mourned their losses and struggled to endure as the Civil War ground on, enslaved women began to imagine a brighter future for themselves and their families, especially in the wake of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.

White women contributed to the construction of pro-southern ideology both during and after the war, and their gendered identity was important to its perpetuation. Diarist Catherine Devereux Edmondston located her Confederate nationalism squarely in her domestic work and gendered identity. North Carolinians were so eager to claim their place in the myth of the Lost Cause that they adopted Confederate spy Rose O'Neal Greenhow—whose only affiliation with the state was her death by drowning just off the North Carolina coast—as their own North Carolina heroine through their subsequent celebration in public memory of her role in the Confederacy. Given the power of this ideology, as well as the losses suffered, many whites, whether or not they had been slaveholders, found Reconstruction a bitter pill. With the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment emancipating slaves in 1865, whites saw the social order they had known turned upside down. Along with continuing economic hardships, the racial hierarchy whites had considered key to a well-ordered society was gone. Blaming freedpeople and the federal government for the postwar turmoil they were experiencing became de rigeur. By contrast, black men and women held out hope they would gain full equality and all the rights and opportunities whites enjoyed. Such hopes soon faded. Though Jim Crow laws came late to North Carolina, racial segregation was legalized, and violence increased by the turn of the century. The state's African American population had little choice but to turn inward and carve out meaningful lives within their own communities or seek out new opportunities in the North.

Meanwhile, postbellum white women, some of them former slaveholders,

began to expand their roles, whether due to their increased access to education, their need to earn a living, or their interest in the wave of progressive reform sweeping the nation. These expanded gender roles were not always accompanied by a feminist sensibility and even less so by an avidity for racial equality. Cornelia Spencer, for example, proved a rigid traditionalist who wielded power through her friendships with important men and through her keen mind and literary accomplishments, but she eschewed women's equality and opposed political and civil rights for African Americans.

By the late nineteenth-century North Carolina's reputation as a sleepy, even backward southern state was no longer totally deserved, however, for it exhibited a progressive streak, one that positively influenced women, black as well as white. During the antebellum period, the General Assembly had debated the need to educate the state's white children. It passed laws setting aside public funds and then appointing a superintendent of public instruction to advance education throughout the state. After the Civil War northern missionaries who came south aided this effort by establishing churches, Sunday schools, and schools to serve former slaves. These efforts led to the founding of a number of black schools and colleges, including Scotia Seminary (later Barber-Scotia College) in Concord, the first school in the state for African American women. North Carolina A&T State University opened its doors to African American students, male and female, in 1891. Recognizing that the state had committed itself to providing public higher education for black women before it had done so for white women, the General Assembly in 1891 chartered the State Normal and Industrial School (later the University of North Carolina at Greensboro), one of the nation's first publicly funded colleges for white women. Private schools and colleges such as St. Mary's School and Meredith College in Raleigh, Greensboro College, and Queens College in Charlotte offered privileged white women unprecedented access to higher education.

At the end of the nineteenth century North Carolina progressives' commitment to generating educational opportunities played a pivotal role in the lives of many women, white and black alike, inspiring their activism and involvement in a world beyond their traditional domestic sphere. Educated women, and especially those in the newly developing towns and cities of the state, saw new possibilities opening up to them. They pursued careers in medicine, law, and education and engaged in community action, social uplift, and even politics. Earning a medical degree allowed Annie Alexander to become the state's first licensed female physician. Margaret Jarman Hagood's scholarly pursuits and work at the University of North Carolina led her to produce a classic study on southern farm women and then pursue the largely male-only profession of

quantitative sociology to great success. Middle- and upper-class women's interest in social engagement led to the formation of the North Carolina General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1902, which fostered a supportive network of public-spirited women. But broader experiences shaped these women's outlooks too. Sallie Southall Cotten, North Carolina's so-called Mother of Clubs, attended the World's Fair in 1893. Her time in Chicago transformed this North Carolina woman by introducing her to a national culture of "organized women." This formative experience pressed her to unite women and create a public role for their perspectives and concerns in North Carolina and the New South for thirty more years. Two of the wealthiest women in the state, Edith Stuyvesant Dresser Vanderbilt, wife of philanthropist George Washington Vanderbilt, and Katharine Smith Reynolds, wife of R. J. Reynolds, the founder of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, not only played a critical role as patrons within each of their respective North Carolina communities, Asheville and Winston-Salem, but led significant social reform efforts across the state as well.

A number of African American women rose to prominence, due in part to their education but also to their wider social networks. Sarah Dudley Pettey, born into the first generation of freedom, used her writing to show black women pressing for women's equality, both within their churches and across North Carolina society at large. Sadie and Bessie Delany, daughters of elite black educators in Raleigh who chose teaching and dentistry as their professions and exchanged North Carolina for New York City during the Great Migration, and Anna Julia Cooper, black feminist scholar, educator, and activist born into slavery—like so many other talented African American women whose opportunities were stunted by Jim Crow segregation laws and racism—had to leave North Carolina to make their lives and careers. Each, however, reflected on how central their lived experiences as North Carolinians proved to their intellectual and political identities. To think about American history or politics or black history without knowing about life in the South from an African American woman's point of view was, these women asserted, narrow minded and profoundly limiting.

The marriage of progressivism and education in North Carolina around the turn of the twentieth century had a lasting influence on white and black women's opportunities and their emerging public roles, but it is important to note that other factors had prompted some North Carolina women to pursue nontraditional trajectories throughout the state's history. Widowhood or a husband's inability to earn a living forced some women from the colonial era right down to the present into the public sphere to support their families. For a few North Carolina women, this entry into the public world brought fame

and sometimes even wealth. The widow Elizabeth Maxwell Steele owned and ran a tavern in Salisbury, North Carolina, that became a gathering place for patriots during the American Revolution, gaining her local prominence and a permanent spot in North Carolinians' memory, perhaps in part because of her self-identification as a great politician. After her husband developed major health problems in the wake of the Civil War, Alice Morgan Person supported her children by creating, manufacturing, and marketing a popular elixir that she transformed into a profitable business. Like a number of nineteenth-century women, Mary Bayard Clarke made a living by writing poems, stories, and essays and became one of the state's best-known authors of her day. She fought for women's professional acceptance regardless of marital status and pushed the boundaries of women's personal and intellectual freedom in postbellum North Carolina. It is significant to note that Clarke was diarist Kate Edmondston's sister, and both were sisters-in-law to Person. Educated women in nineteenth-century North Carolina remained part of an interconnected and powerful elite; their social networks were extensive and deep, and both aided women's reform efforts and shaped their participation in them well into the twentieth century.

Industrialization brought major changes to North Carolina that profoundly shaped working-class women's experiences and prospects. Textile factories moved from New England to the South beginning in the late nineteenth century in order to take advantage of cheap labor and easy access to raw cotton, just as tobacco production and manufacturing became a significant part of the state's economy too. White and black women alike made up a large number of these paid laborers, although the textile labor force was largely white, while the tobacco labor force remained heavily African American. Many North Carolina families abandoned their hardscrabble existence as tenant farmers or sharecroppers, moving to one of the scores of cotton mill villages and tobacco factory towns springing up in the Piedmont to secure steady wages. Often entire families worked in these establishments, creating a strong sense of community even as all workers suffered low pay, long hours, and unhealthy working conditions, and black workers endured entrenched racism and even lower wages.

From the eighteenth century down to the present, in the midst of these larger structural changes, there were always a few "ill-behaved women" who ignored the unspoken rules regarding proper female behavior and made history by asserting their views or by protesting and stirring up trouble. In 1774 Edenton women held a "tea party" to boycott imported East India tea, joining male patriots in protesting British oppression, making them perhaps the first women in the colonies to organize against the British crown. The economic backgrounds of these fifty-one Edenton ladies who signed the petition show that while the

majority of signers came from slave-owning families, some of the signatories were less well off, reflecting a social mix of women that intentionally honored politics over class. Even enslaved women in early North Carolina found ways to challenge their presumed subordination, as in the case of Anna, an African woman who was sold to the Moravian Church in Salem and then became integrated into the Salem and Bethabara communities after the American Revolution. When her relationship to her masters and to her biracial church fell into dispute, Anna secured respite as part of a black congregation created under the auspices of white leadership. She finally found the community of equals she had been denied in her work as a slave woman in a tavern and a religious community that kept such clear boundaries between whites and blacks.

In the next century, the slave Harriet Jacobs hid in an attic for years in order to escape her predatory master, eventually making her way north to freedom. Her narrative recounting her harrowing experiences has become a classic. The psychological impact of her prolonged fight for freedom, as well as the personal cost of her national fame by the end of her life, is a critical vantage point. A different kind of female assertiveness was evident in the twentieth century. Ella Mae Wiggins led her fellow workingmen and -women in a labor strike at Loray Mills in Gastonia in 1929; Crystal Lee Sutton, made famous in the film *Norma Rae*, did the same forty-four years later at the J. P. Stevens plant in Roanoke Rapids. While Wiggins paid with her life for her perceived outspokenness, Sutton suffered personally and professionally long after she was fired.

Black and white North Carolina women's growing access to education and the opportunities they created for themselves from that exposure, along with the innovative and courageous ways in which black and white women met serious economic challenges and social and political inequities, are all critical themes in this two-volume collection. But another important theme is that of place. North Carolina is well known for its distinctive regional geography and the ways its particular socioeconomic development has been shaped by it. Only eastern soil supported cash-crop plantation economies, for example, whereas the proximity to rivers to generate power and to produce bright-leaf tobacco helped dictate industrial development in the Piedmont. These realities of locale in turn shaped women's experiences as daughters, wives, mothers, workers, reformers, leaders, and eventually full-fledged citizens.

The Appalachian region in the western part of the state had a profound impact on women's lives, perhaps more so than any other region in the state, and attracted the interest and involvement of non-native-born women. Early in the twentieth century, sociologists, historians, missionaries, teachers, and reformers from more established parts of the country and Europe flocked to

the North Carolina mountains to study this region's people, to establish schools and churches, and to cultivate the region's many craft traditions. Engaging in various mountain communities were women like Dr. Mary Martin Sloop, Lucy Morgan, and Olive Dame Campbell, who helped to found a number of institutions, including the Crossnore School, the Penland School, and the Campbell Folk School. The region also produced female artists such as Samantha Bumgarner, a talented singer and four-string banjo player, and Arizona Nick Swaney Blankenship, whose upbringing among the Cherokees led her to become a renowned basketmaker and teacher.

By the twentieth century, the state's progressive streak strengthened, thanks in part to a growing number of women who engaged in and influenced state and national policies and politics. In 1902 Daisy Denson became the first woman to head the state's welfare board, and from that position she addressed a number of issues, including child labor and prison reform. Women fought for the right to vote despite strong resistance. North Carolina's male legislators were so opposed to women's suffrage that at one point they sent the proposed Nineteenth Amendment to their committee on insane asylums. But to women, the issue was no joke, and some like Gertrude Weil fought tirelessly for the amendment. Once it was ratified in 1920 (but not by North Carolina until 1971), Weil founded the state chapter of the League of Women Voters to give women a stronger, better-informed voice on political issues. Gladys Avery Tillett, an ardent Democrat and supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal, became a major presence in her party at both the state and national levels. Best remembered by scholars for her pioneering works of social history, Guion Griffis Johnson turned to volunteer work in the postwar years, becoming one of the state's most prominent female civic leaders. Through her excellent education, keen legal mind, and family prominence, Susie Sharp in 1949 became the first woman judge in North Carolina and, in 1974, the first woman in the nation to serve as chief justice of a state supreme court.

African American women were critical leaders too, active in both the progressive movement and the civil rights movement. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, born in North Carolina but educated in Boston, returned to her home state as a young woman, becoming one of the most successful fund-raisers among African American educators in U.S. history, heading Palmer Memorial Institute—an accredited and nationally recognized African American school—for fifty years before she died in 1961. Pauli Murray sought admittance to the University of North Carolina's Law School but was rejected because of her race. Instead, she earned a law degree from Howard University and assisted Thurgood Marshall in researching the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court

decision. Ella Baker, raised as a Black Baptist in rural North Carolina, radicalized amid Harlem's Renaissance and subsequent depression, came to embrace a deeply democratic philosophy throughout her long years of leadership in the civil rights movement. A critical supporter of the students who participated in sit-ins at Greensboro's Woolworth in 1960, she then encouraged them to found the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee to counter the more staid National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. For all these important African American women, those who lived their entire lives in North Carolina and those who did not, their North Carolina experience was central to their understanding of their racial and gender identity and therefore to their reform work and political vision. This essential North Carolina experience was also reflected in the outpouring of North Carolina women's writings in the last half of the twentieth century. North Carolina has boasted a long and distinguished literary history supported by outstanding writing programs at North Carolina's colleges and universities. But it was not until the 1960s that a serendipitous intersection of talented women writers and this supportive literary environment launched an explosion of exceptional women authors on the literary scene, including Doris Betts, Jill McCorkle, Lee Smith, Pamela Duncan, Kathryn Stripling Byer, and Mary Mebane.

In acknowledging North Carolina women's many achievements, one must also recognize them as products of their time. As a few essays show, some prominent white women—such as Cornelia Phillips Spencer, an influential figure at the University of North Carolina and in state politics, journalism, and higher education more generally, and professional author Mary Bayard Clarke—publicly endorsed white supremacy and infused their writings with racist comments. Nell Battle Lewis, a journalist who held liberal views on many social and economic issues, opposed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision because it undercut her belief in the benefits of white paternalism, and she rallied her readers to embrace massive resistance. Ellen Winston, in some respects a liberal-minded woman of the twentieth century, supported the state's eugenics program, believing that sterilizing individuals who were "feeble-minded, insane, or overly promiscuous" would have a positive influence on society, at the same time that she was building a pioneering welfare system to support the state's underprivileged. While these views may be jarring, if not repellant to read today, they reveal widely held beliefs from a far different time.

We are proud to add these two volumes on North Carolina women to the series *Their Lives and Times*, published by the University of Georgia Press. The women included here only begin to celebrate the many outstanding women

who broke barriers, achieved prominence, or made an impact on their communities, the state, or the nation. Since selectivity was essential, many deserving women had to be left out. Multiple factors influenced our choices, including the need for extensive, accessible primary sources; a relevant connection to North Carolina; an expert willing and able to research and write the essay; and a balanced representation of women across time, space, accomplishments, and race. With the exception of one essay on women writers past and present, we include here only those women who are deceased. We sought to incorporate a variety of interests and occupations and to balance a paucity of influential women from the colonial and antebellum periods with the many women who made their mark in the twentieth century.

We thank all our authors for the energy, commitment, and time they put into researching and writing these essays, as well as our wonderful editor, Nancy Grayson. We have deeply valued working with all the University of Georgia Press staff, especially Sue Breckenridge, Jon Davies, and Beth Snead. The amazing individuals in these essays offer a broad exposure to the myriad contributions women made to the Tar Heel State and to its history. By all accounts, their extraordinary achievements and impact certainly belie the image of North Carolina as a sleepy state.

The Edenton Ladies

Women, Tea, and Politics in Revolutionary North Carolina

CYNTHIA A. KIERNER

In October 1774 fifty-one women from the town of Edenton and its environs resolved to support the suspension of all trade to protest the latest in a long line of unjust imperial policies. The women's seemingly unexceptional intent—to support their men and their country—belied the novelty of their actions. By the 1770s many women knew of the colonies' ongoing disputes with Britain, and some had participated in nonconsumption efforts to secure the repeal of objectionable laws and taxes. In Boston, women initiated a tea boycott in 1767, and some three hundred unnamed "Mistresses of Families" publicly pledged to continue to "abstain from the Use of TEA" in 1770. But the Edenton women's actions were more daring: their patriotic statement was published, along with its signers' names, in at least two contemporary newspapers. As the first recorded case in which a group of women asserted their political principles in writing and in their own names, the Edenton episode was a pivotal moment in the history of women's relationship to public life.[1]

Known popularly as the "Edenton Ladies' Tea Party," this episode is famous but also oddly elusive. Modern accounts reiterate the story of fifty-one "ladies" gathering in the home of Elizabeth King to renounce their favorite beverage by signing a statement penned by the attractive and socially prominent Penelope Barker.[2] That handwritten document has not survived, however, and no one left letters, memoirs, or other firsthand evidence of the women's activities. In fact, only four contemporary sources acknowledged the incident. A brief notice in the *Virginia Gazette* included the text of the women's statement and a complete list of signers, as did a subsequent item that appeared in a London newspaper.

Arthur Iredell, an English clergyman who read the London report, mentioned it in a letter to his brother James, who lived in Edenton. Philip Dawe, an obscure English artist, also presumably read the published account of the Edenton meeting, because he soon produced an unflattering caricature of it.

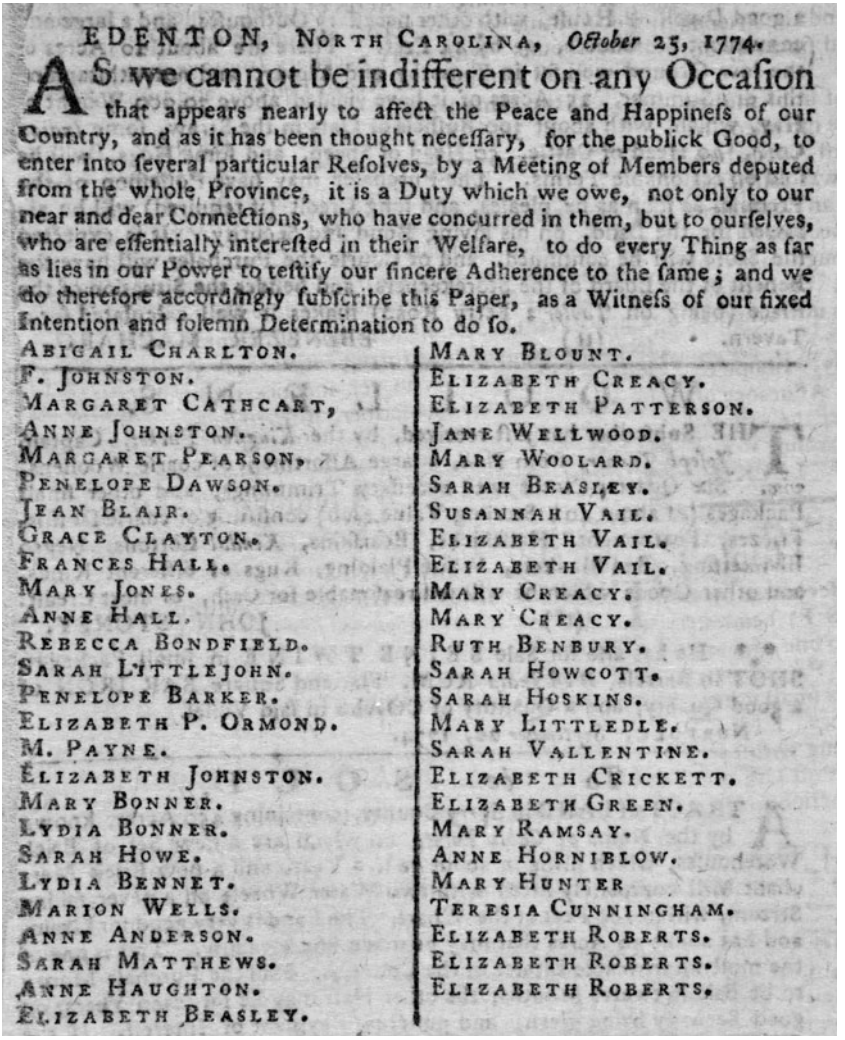
This essay reconsiders these four contemporary sources, along with tax lists and other records, exposing errors in the traditional story and placing Edenton's female patriots in their broader historical context. While the traditional narrative presents the Edenton women as exemplars of spontaneous and genteel domestic patriotism, a careful reassessment of who they were—and what they did and said—shows that their actions were organized and purposeful and that their campaign to mobilize support for their political agenda led them to forge contacts beyond their households, even far beyond their familiar circles of family and friends. Despite their later commemoration as housebound tea-drinking ladies who stood by their men, these colonial women were assertive, adventurous, and well informed about the crisis that increasingly engulfed North Carolina and its twelve sister colonies in British America.

In 1774 as the marquee events of the imperial crisis unfolded in Boston and Philadelphia, what happened in the port town of Edenton attracted little attention, at least outside the pages of the *Virginia Gazette*. Neither of the two Charleston newspapers mentioned the Edenton women, and it also seems unlikely that the *North Carolina Gazette* included coverage of their activities. Most issues of the *North Carolina Gazette* for 1774 have not survived, but Janet Schaw, a Scottish visitor who probably read the local paper, did not mention the Edenton women in her journal, where she often commented on local politics, including the fact that "the Ladies . . . burnt their tea in a solemn procession" in Wilmington the following spring. At any rate, though Edenton was isolated compared to Charleston and Norfolk—the busiest ports in the southern colonies—and downright rustic compared to major northern cities, it was only about eighty miles from Williamsburg, a hotbed of pre-Revolutionary activism, where the *Virginia Gazette* was published. Goods and people often passed between the two towns, and at least one of the signers of the women's manifesto had personal connections in Virginia's colonial capital. Penelope Johnston, the orphaned daughter of North Carolina governor Gabriel Johnston, resided in Williamsburg with the family of Virginia governor Robert Dinwiddie before she eloped with John Dawson in 1758 and returned to North Carolina.[3]

If Penelope Dawson retained her Williamsburg contacts, perhaps she sent the story to the editors of the *Virginia Gazette*, who printed the women's entire statement on November 3, 1774:

PHILIP DAWE, *A SOCIETY OF PATRIOTIC LADIES*, 1775

This now-famous mezzotint shows the women of Edenton signing a manifesto that, unlike their actual statement, condemns as "pernicious" the "custom of drinking tea." One seemingly genteel lady is being seduced and another neglects her child while the group's mannish leader looks on. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



EDENTON, NORTH CAROLINA, *October* 25, 1774.

AS we cannot be indifferent on any Occaſion that appears nearly to affect the Peace and Happineſs of our Country, and as it has been thought neceſſary, for the publick Good, to enter into ſeveral particular Reſolves, by a Meeting of Members deputed from the whole Province, it is a Duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear Connections, who have concurred in them, but to ourſelves, who are eſſentially intereſted in their Welfare, to do every Thing as far as lies in our Power to teſtify our ſincere Adherence to the ſame; and we do therefore accordingly ſubſcribe this Paper, as a Witneſs of our fixed Intention and ſolemn Determination to do ſo.

ABIGAIL CHARLTON.
F. JOHNSTON.
MARGARET CATHCART,
ANNE JOHNSTON.
MARGARET PEARSON,
PENELOPE DAWSON.
JEAN BLAIR.
GRACE CLAYTON.
FRANCES HALL.
MARY JONES.
ANNE HALL.
REBECCA BONDFIELD.
SARAH LITTLEJOHN.
PENELOPE BARKER.
ELIZABETH P. ORMOND.
M. PAYNE.
ELIZABETH JOHNSTON.
MARY BONNER.
LYDIA BONNER.
SARAH HOWE.
LYDIA BENNET.
MARION WELLS.
ANNE ANDERSON.
SARAH MATTHEWS.
ANNE HAUGHTON.
ELIZABETH BEASLEY.

MARY BLOUNT.
ELIZABETH CREACY.
ELIZABETH PATTERSON.
JANE WELLWOOD.
MARY WOOLARD.
SARAH BEASLEY.
SUSANNAH VAIL.
ELIZABETH VAIL.
ELIZABETH VAIL.
MARY CREACY.
MARY CREACY.
RUTH BENBURY.
SARAH HOWCOTT.
SARAH HOSKINS.
MARY LITTLEDLE.
SARAH VALLENTINE.
ELIZABETH CRICKETT.
ELIZABETH GREEN.
MARY RAMSAY.
ANNE HORNIBLOW.
MARY HUNTER
TERESIA CUNNINGHAM.
ELIZABETH ROBERTS.
ELIZABETH ROBERTS.
ELIZABETH ROBERTS.

PURDIE AND DIXON'S *VIRGINIA GAZETTE*, NOVEMBER 3, 1774

Both the Williamsburg newspaper and the *Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser* printed the Edenton women's statement, along with its entire list of signers. Penelope Barker's name appears in the middle of the first column. The Library of Virginia.

> As we cannot be indifferent on any Occasion that appears nearly to affect the Peace and Happiness of our Country, and as it has been thought necessary, for the publick Good, to enter into several particular Resolves, by a Meeting of Members deputed from the whole Province, it is a Duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear Connections, who have concurred in them, but to ourselves, who are essentially interested in their Welfare, to do every Thing as far as lies in our Power to testify our sincere Adherence to the same; and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this Paper, as a Witness of our fixed Intention and solemn Determination to do so.

The *Gazette* carried this text, along with the names of the fifty-one women who endorsed it.[4]

The timing of the women's declaration indicates that they knew that North Carolina's provincial congress, which had met in August, recommended suspending trade with Britain. They also were well informed about the proceedings of the Continental Congress, whose initial resolutions appeared in newspapers in early September and whose delegates formally voted on October 20—just four days before the Edenton women prepared their statement—to cease all trade with Britain until colonial grievances were redressed. Like most members of Congress, the women accepted a general stoppage of trade, even though that meant that mercantile families would have fewer wares to sell, tavern-keeping families would run out of the imported port and madeira they sold to wealthy patrons, and planter families could not ship their crops to London or elsewhere. Although tea was emblematic of feminine gentility and of imperial commerce generally, the fact that the word "tea" appeared nowhere in the women's statement shows they understood that the consequences of acting on their principles reached far beyond their tea tables, requiring them to sacrifice more than their pleasant rites of sociability. Implementation of the congressional plan, known as the Continental Association, would bring the local economy to a standstill, adversely affecting both Edenton's merchants and tobacco-producing planters in the town's agricultural hinterland.

The fact that the women did not mention tea specifically is also significant because virtually all contemporary portrayals of female patriots cited the renunciation of tea—and, to a lesser extent, of fashionable clothing—as their signature act. An often-reprinted poem, "Address to the Ladies," which appeared in colonial newspapers as early as 1767, urged female readers to "throw aside your high top knots of pride, / Wear none but your own country linnen" and also to abjure "your Bohea, and your green Hyson tea," intimating that doing so would make them more appealing to patriotic men. Subsequent essays and poems focused more exclusively on the renunciation of tea and its accoutre-

ments as women's main contribution to the patriot cause. In 1773 the *Gazette* featured a poem about an admirable woman who gave up tea because she believed her continued indulgence would "*fasten Slavish Chains upon my Country*." In another verse, published in 1774, a patriotic female narrator described a "handsome Set of Tea China" as a "Snare" to promote the designs of imperial authorities who would violate colonial liberties.[5]

The vastly different tenor of the *Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, the other newspaper that reported the activities of the Edenton women, established a context in which readers would more readily interpret the episode in a negative light. Though not rabidly anti-American, the *Chronicle* carried stories and advertisements that were critical of colonial dissidents and skeptical of their motives. The front page of the issue that contained news of the Edenton meeting also included an advertisement for a pamphlet written by a New York farmer who promised to expose the errors of the Continental Congress and its "violent supporters." An item adjacent to the piece on the Edenton episode reassured readers that if colonists stopped trading with Britain, merchants could "apply elsewhere and . . . the new markets we sell in, may take off more of our manufactures, and at a better price, than we ever received from America."[6]

The Edenton story appeared in the *Chronicle* under the heading "Extract of a letter from North Carolina." Its anonymous author reported that the "ladies" followed the lead of their colony's provincial congress by resolving "*not* to drink any more *tea*, nor wear any more British cloth," thus invoking conventional images of female consumption, though neither the Edenton women nor the provincial congress had singled out either tea or textiles in their respective declarations. With more than a hint of sarcasm, the correspondent explained to English readers—and to English women especially—how "zealously and faithfully American ladies follow the laudable example of their husbands, and what opposition your *matchless* ministers may expect to receive from a people thus firmly united against them." Most English readers would not have viewed the women's conduct as praiseworthy. Some may have seen their activism as permissible, though inconsequential, assuming that the women merely parroted their husbands' views. Others, who regarded politics as the exclusive domain of gentlemen, considered women's political activism a form of usurpation and thus de facto evidence of the illegitimacy of the colonists' cause.[7]

Both views informed the opinion of the clergyman Arthur Iredell, who read the *Chronicle* article and wrote his brother James a chatty letter in which he gently mocked the women's patriotic efforts. James Iredell had come to Edenton as a royally appointed customs collector in the late 1760s, securing his place in the local elite by marrying Hannah Johnston—niece of a royal governor and

sister of the region's wealthiest planter—in 1773. Although Hannah did not sign the women's manifesto, two of her sisters, one sister-in-law, and several other relations and friends had done so. Arthur Iredell noted the "name of Johnston . . . among the others" and queried slyly, "Is there a Female Congress at Edenton too?," adding whimsically, "I hope not, for we Englishmen are afraid of the Male Congress, but if the Ladies . . . should attack us, the most fatal consequences is to be dreaded." James, who was ambivalent toward the colonial protests in 1774 (though he accepted independence two years later) probably disapproved of the newfound notoriety of his female in-laws and others in their social circle. Though typically a conscientious correspondent, he never addressed his brother's comments about the Edenton women.[8]

Another Englishman, Philip Dawe, produced the most enduring and most unequivocally hostile commentary on the Edenton women. Dawe was a marginal painter and mezzotint engraver whose works often portrayed women. Though his earlier productions featured flattering images of modest women, especially servants, Dawe was creating savage caricatures of fashionable women by the mid-1770s and his mezzotint *A Society of Patriotic Ladies*, in which he satirized the Edenton women, was a stunning example of that genre.

Representing the women variously as mannish hags, neglectful mothers, and shameless harlots, Dawe suggested that these women were not at all "ladies," while he simultaneously disparaged colonial protests as the work of people whom both law and custom deemed unfit to express political opinions or wield political power. The image suggests that the finely dressed women who sat around the table compromised their respectability by risking seduction, neglecting their children, and associating with vulgar, lower-class white women and African Americans. Moreover, though his image seemed to credit the women—or perhaps their male companions—with a basic knowledge of current events, he nevertheless made tea, as a commodity and a political symbol, the central element in their political consciousness. Unfurled across a table, in Dawe's rendition of the episode, the women's manifesto asserted, "We the Ladys of Edenton do hereby Solemnly Engage not to Conform to that Pernicious Custom of Drinking Tea, or . . . promote use of any Manufacture from England until such time as all Acts which tend to enslave this our Native Country shall be Repealed."[9]

Whatever its shortcomings, Dawe's representation of the Edenton meeting belied the notion that fifty-one women could have assembled all together in one of the town's private homes to sign their manifesto. What Dawe got right was the relatively cramped space of even the most genteel Edenton houses, as well as the diversity of both the town's inhabitants and the women who en-

dorsed the famous declaration. Dawe's fourteen adult figures—three of whom are men—crowd a room adorned with expensive windows and draperies and handsome furniture. Probably the only room in town that could have accommodated all fifty-one signers was the "great assembly room" on the second floor of the county courthouse, which measured thirty by forty-five feet. In the eighteenth century so large a gathering of women in such a public space, with or without a few men in attendance, would have been unprecedented and controversial. The fact that no one, either then or later, described the women as having commandeered that space suggests they met elsewhere.[10]

Yet fifty-one women eventually affixed their names to the document, and public records—marriage records, wills, and especially tax lists—shed some light on them and on the community they inhabited. In 1774 tax assessors found a total of 471 households in the six districts that together composed Chowan County and its seat, Edenton, a port town that was one of the oldest and largest in North Carolina. With approximately a thousand inhabitants—nearly half of whom were enslaved—Edenton was the site of Chowan's only church, St. Paul's, before Baptists established a congregation in the county in 1771. Edenton was also home to the county courthouse, with its big upstairs room used for political meetings, balls, receptions, and other social occasions. The town had at least four taverns, crucial venues for sharing newspapers and for discussing politics, which helps explain why Elizabeth Green and Anne Horniblow, both wives of tavern keepers, were among the Edenton signers.[11]

Townswomen were prominent among the endorsers of the Edenton manifesto, but rural women actually accounted for the majority of signers. With its comparatively high population density and steady flow of information from incoming ships, travelers, and neighborly gossip, the town of Edenton accounted for at least eleven of the fifty-one signatories (or more than 20 percent overall), though the town's sixty-four households constituted only 13.6 percent of the county's total. Tax lists and other evidence indicate that at least twenty-six other signers resided elsewhere in Chowan. Bertie County, which lay to the southwest across the Chowan River, was home to five women whose names appeared on the list of signers, while two others may have resided in Perquimans County, Chowan's eastern neighbor. The participation of so many rural women is noteworthy, given the predominantly urban character of the colonial resistance movement generally.[12]

According to tradition, the women's manifesto was the brainchild of Edenton resident Penelope Barker, who convened a meeting at the home of Elizabeth King to mobilize local women to support the policies of the Continental Congress and of North Carolina's own provincial congress. Yet the tax lists indicate

that there was no King residence in Edenton in 1774 and that the only King household in the entire county was one of marginal means located in one of the county's poorer districts. The evidence therefore suggests the presumed site of the meeting is apocryphal, but there is no reason to doubt the leadership of the independent, wealthy, and well-connected Penelope Barker.

An Edenton native, twenty-nine-year-old Penelope Padgett Hodgson Craven was already a twice-widowed heiress who had garnered property from both her father and her deceased spouses when she married Thomas Barker, a prominent attorney and member of the colonial assembly in 1757. Four years later, Thomas went to London as North Carolina's colonial agent; war between Britain and the colonies delayed his return to Edenton until 1778. In the intervening years Penelope oversaw the management of her husband's property and her own. That Thomas left his "beloved wife" in charge of his substantial holdings and later made her coexecutor of his estate showed his confidence in her abilities. That he bequeathed to her all his books suggests she had a lively intellect, though like most women of her era, she probably had little formal education.[13]

Penelope Barker's connections in Edenton, which were extensive and impressive, included close ties to the influential Johnston family. In the 1750s, Samuel Johnston, nephew of Governor Gabriel Johnston, had studied law with Thomas Barker. The two remained friends, and by 1774, Samuel Johnston was Chowan's leading citizen and the patriarch of Hayes plantation, where he lived with his English-born wife, Frances Cathcart Johnston, her sister Margaret, and his unmarried sister, Anne. The Johnstons' cousin, the widowed Penelope Dawson, lived on her plantation in nearby Bertie County, where her friends and neighbors included Margaret Pearson and Elizabeth Williams Johnston, the wife of Samuel's brother John. Another Johnston sibling, Jean Johnston Blair, who ran her husband's mercantile business after his death, resided in Edenton with her children. All of these women—some of whose names Arthur Iredell had recognized in London's *Morning Chronicle*—were on friendly terms with Penelope Barker. All seven signed the patriotic manifesto that she presumably authored.[14]

Tangled ties of kinship and friendship also connected signers who were outside of this most elite circle of Edenton society. Take, for instance, the expansive network that included Mary Standing Bonner and her daughter Lydia, one of three single women who signed the manifesto along with her mother. Decades earlier, Mary Standing and Elizabeth Hardy had married brothers; Elizabeth's husband had died and she remarried, and both she and Mary had adult children by the 1770s. In 1774 Mary Standing Bonner's daughter signed the statement, as did the daughter-in-law of Elizabeth Hardy Bonner Roberts. So, too, did

Sarah Blount Littlejohn, the half-sister of Lydia Bonner's fiancé, John Blount. Another signer, Anne Anderson, had a close (but undetermined) relationship with Sarah Littlejohn, to whom she bequeathed all her clothes and linens when she wrote her will in 1783. By marrying into the Blount family, moreover, Lydia Bonner connected herself and her kin with one of the region's largest and most prominent clans. Penelope Barker's mother had been a Blount, and Mary Hoskins Blount, from Perquimans County, was among the Edenton signers, as was Sarah Whedbee Hoskins, who was Mary Blount's mother.[15]

All of these women came from privileged families, at least insofar as all those who could be identified in the county tax lists lived in slaveholding households. Although slavery was increasingly widespread in eastern North Carolina, in 1774 more than 40 percent of the households in Edenton and Chowan County did not include tithable slaves (which was the legal term for enslaved people aged sixteen and older, whose labor was deemed sufficiently valuable to be taxed). The signers' families were therefore part of the local slaveholding elite, even if their circumstances and status varied widely. With thirty-two adult slaves, the lawyer and planter Samuel Johnston, husband of Frances Cathcart Johnston and brother or brother-in-law of several other signers, was the county's leading slaveholder. Sarah Blount Littlejohn's husband, William, an Edenton merchant who resided in town and therefore had no use for a large enslaved workforce but who nonetheless paid taxes on nineteen enslaved adults, was probably a slave trader. At the other end of the spectrum were Teresia Cunningham, the wife of a ship's master, and the widow Sarah Howe, each of whom had one enslaved worker in her household. Overall, the mean among the signers and their families was ownership of six enslaved adults.[16]

The signers also came disproportionately from the county's two most affluent tax districts, the town of Edenton and the district where Edward Vail, a prominent patriot and the husband of signer Susannah Beasley Vail, served as tax collector. In Vail's district, roughly 84 percent of the fifty-six households owned slaves, and the average number of tithable slaves per household, at 5.48, was significantly higher than elsewhere in the county. In Edenton, more than 70 percent of householders had tithable slaves, and at 3.13 the average number of slaves per household in the town exceeded that of most of the county's rural areas. Although relatively few enslaved people worked as domestic servants in the eighteenth century, Edenton's well-heeled patriots, like elites in other colonial cities, enjoyed the services of house servants—and the status they afforded—in the pre-Revolutionary era.[17]

Yet even if their shared status as slaveholders distinguished the signers from the rest of their neighbors, the "society of patriotic ladies," as Dawe's image

suggested, was not a society of equals. Just as colonists had for decades used civic rituals like militia musters to foster unity among white men of varying social ranks, Penelope Barker and her circle of friends among the local gentry reached out to neighbors who, though respectable members of the propertied classes, were undeniably beneath them in the county's social hierarchy. Lydia Boyd Bennet, the wife of a hatter, and Elizabeth Green and Anne Horniblow, whose husbands owned taverns, were included among the signers, along with the daughter of a governor (Penelope Dawson) and the mother of an English baronet (Margaret Pearson). Dawson and the Cathcart sisters, erudite women who had benefited from first-rate educations with private tutors, affixed their names to a document whose signatories included at least three women—Ruth Benbury, Elizabeth Hardy Bonner Roberts, and Mary Woolard—who could not write their names and thus signified their adherence by making their marks. But these three women were by no means poor. Benbury's household included nineteen tithable slaves, Roberts's husband owned eight enslaved adults, and the widowed Woolard possessed seven slaves in her own right when she made her will in 1789.[18]

While gentlemen throughout the southern colonies included poor white men in the activities of their local patriotic committees and militia units—if only to prevent them from pursuing their own more radical agendas—the Edenton ladies cast their net somewhat more narrowly, seeking support only from elite and middling women. At least three factors help explain their more limited objectives. First, though gentlemen traditionally mingled with other white men from across the social spectrum on court days and at militia musters, their wives and daughters had less contact with women who were significantly beneath them in social rank. Second, recent riots in North Carolina and elsewhere, along with the ever-present fear of slave revolt, led many gentlemen to perceive the danger of alienating middling and poor men, who might rise up against gentry rule, possibly even allying themselves with slaves and free blacks. Non-elite women, who generally did not riot, posed no comparable threat.[19] Finally, Barker and her associates may have surmised that seeking support from Chowan's lower social strata would undermine the respectability of their undertaking and sully their reputations, just as Philip Dawe insinuated in his derogatory depiction of them.

The order in which the signers' names appeared in both published versions of the women's statement offers clues as to how Penelope Barker and her associates collected signatures for their patriotic declaration. The preponderance of Barker's known friends and connections in the first group of fourteen signers suggests that these women came together somewhere in Edenton to sign the document before circulating it among other women, a hypothesis supported by a mid-nineteenth-century newspaper article based on information from one

long-lived signer, which stated that "twelve or fifteen" women met initially "at a house" where "the resolutions were passed." Richard Creecy Benbury, a descendant of several signers, believed that these women met at the home of Penelope Barker, which was located at the corner of Broad and Queen Streets, near the homes of several other members of this initial group of fourteen signers.[20]

In both published versions of the list of signers, Barker's was the fourteenth name in the first of two columns, positioned below the names of thirteen women who were either certain or possible members of her inner circle. Abigail Charlton, the wife of a prominent and long-established Edenton lawyer, who was probably friendly with Thomas Barker, a fellow attorney, was the first to sign. She was immediately followed by six members of the Johnston-Cathcart-Dawson family and their friend Margaret Pearson, who also knew the Charltons. Next came Grace Clayton, one of the few signers about whom virtually nothing is known. Frances Hall, the widow of the Reverend Clement Hall, former rector of St. Paul's, then signed, along with her two daughters, Anne and Mary. The latter's husband, Thomas Jones, had been one of Chowan's delegates to the provincial congress, along with Samuel Johnston. Although Mary Hall Jones lived in Edenton, her mother and sister resided on a plantation located one mile north of town. Two other Edenton residents, Rebecca Bondfield, a frequent companion of Jean Johnston Blair, and Sarah Littlejohn, the Charltons' neighbor on West Eden Street, added their names before Penelope Barker became the fourteenth signer.[21]

If this small gathering of friends and kin in a domestic setting to some extent conformed to existing models of female patriotism, what happened next did not. The fact that the order of the remaining signers reveals no geographic pattern suggests that Barker or someone else approached them individually or in small groups. Mary Bonner's name immediately precedes that of her daughter Lydia, and three sets of sisters—Lydia Boyd Bennet and Marion Boyd Wells, Elizabeth Wellwood Patterson and Jane Wellwood, and Sarah Crickett Valentine and Elizabeth Crickett—signed one after the other. Three members of the Vail family also signed together, as did two members of the Creacy family and three women named Elizabeth Roberts. The women may have met at church, though many of the signers, unlike Barker, were not members of St. Paul's and may have attended services there infrequently or not at all. Perhaps canvassers visited well-known patriot households. Although there is no way to know exactly when and where the additional thirty-seven women signed the document, the process of acquiring signatures was sufficiently quick for the text and the list of signers to arrive in Williamsburg and to be set in type in time to appear in the *Virginia Gazette* only nine days after Barker and the others initiated the project.[22]

In some important respects, the Edenton women's effort foreshadowed the much more ambitious and well-documented project undertaken six years later by the Ladies Association of Philadelphia, which historians generally acknowledge as a watershed in the emergence of women's organized public activism. In 1780 elite women in the republic's largest city organized a fund-raising effort to benefit underfed and poorly clothed Continental soldiers. Like Penelope Barker and her associates, the leaders of the Philadelphia group mobilized supporters outside their immediate social circle, canvassing door to door. Like the Edenton women, the Pennsylvanians also published a manifesto, though theirs was less a general policy statement than a targeted call for women to emulate history's heroines by sacrificing "vain ornaments" in wartime and offering "the homage of our gratitude at the altar of military valour" by helping America's suffering soldiers. Perhaps because they modeled a distinctly feminine form of patriotism, the Philadelphia women, unlike their Edenton counterparts, received lavish praise, and their work inspired similar efforts among women in neighboring states. The crisis of wartime shortages and the active involvement of top-tier notables (including Martha Washington, Sarah Franklin Bache, and the wives of several governors) also contributed to the success and fame of the women of 1780, whose exceptional efforts, according to one historian, "would surely have been condemned" twenty years earlier.[23]

In 1774 Edenton's women patriots were not necessarily the wives of the area's most prominent male critics of British imperial policies. With the exception of Margaret Pearson, whose son was an English baronet and an absentee landowner in Bertie County, none of the Edenton signers had relatives who actively opposed the patriot movement that led to the Revolution, but surprisingly few were the wives or daughters of men who were leading opponents of British imperial policies. That was especially true of the thirty-seven women who signed the document after Penelope Barker and her inner circle, whose connections included two important future revolutionaries, Samuel Johnston and Thomas Jones. Among the latter group, only the three Vail women and perhaps Mary Hunter appear to be closely connected to prominent male patriots. Most signers, therefore, were not simply following the political lead of their husbands, fathers, or brothers.[24]

Although it seems logical to assume that these women and their families supported independence in 1776 and endured the trials of the war that followed, they left scant evidence of their wartime experiences and no evidence at all of how they understood the significance of their actions. There is no indication the Edenton women sought acclaim in the postwar era—and, indeed, they received none. The *State Gazette of North Carolina*, which was published in Edenton

until 1799, never mentioned the town's female patriots, nor did the *Raleigh Register*, which after 1800 was the state's most important newspaper. Each year the *Register* featured detailed coverage of Independence Day celebrations throughout the state, which typically ended with a round of toasts honoring past and present patriot heroes. Those reports show that even in their hometown of Edenton, the patriotic women of 1774 did not merit formal commemoration. Post-Revolutionary Americans took pride in their local histories, chronicling the story of the Revolution and its heroes in their states. Virginians had Patrick Henry and George Washington—men of strong words and brave acts—and Massachusetts had the Boston Massacre and Bunker Hill. North Carolina had the Edenton ladies, whose commitment, however significant in 1774, did not fit Americans' postwar identity as a nation of citizens who were independent, martial, and male.[25]

Beginning in 1819, however, North Carolinians were able to celebrate an example of homegrown patriotism that was on par with those of other states. On April 30, 1819, the *Raleigh Register* published the text of a document that came to be known as the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. According to this report, twenty-seven men from Mecklenburg County had gathered in May 1775 to compose and sign a declaration of independence from Great Britain that anticipated by more than a year Jefferson's more famous rendition, which it resembled in key respects. Like the Edenton women's manifesto, the Mecklenburg Declaration has not survived in its original manuscript form. Unlike the Edenton episode, which was substantiated by four contemporary sources—the two newspaper accounts, the Iredell letter, and Dawe's mezzotint—there was no evidence from 1775 to prove the veracity of the Mecklenburg story. Like Jefferson, who dismissed the so-called Mecklenburg Declaration as "spurious," modern historians generally have not deemed it credible, but patriotic North Carolinians embraced it as proof that their state had been first in the fight for American freedom.[26]

Meanwhile, more than half a century passed before anyone mentioned the Edenton women in any public venue. When they did, it was the Dawe mezzotint, rather than the women's actions, that was the focus of an essay that appeared in the nationally circulating *Niles' Weekly Register* and in at least three other less influential publications, only one of which was based in North Carolina. First published in 1827, this essay recounted the story of John Rodgers, an American naval commander whose recent Mediterranean voyage had included a stop in Minorca, where he discovered a copy of Dawe's print in a shoemaker's shop. The press described the image, which had been transferred to glass, as a "curious relic of our revolution," the work of a "tory artist" who sought to

"ridicule the patriotic spirit" of the colonists. Rodgers brought the artifact home with him, intending to send it to North Carolina. Eventually, it arrived in Edenton, where, one newspaper reported years later, the glass image "subsequently became broken, much to the regret of the citizens," though its fragments were preserved.[27]

A more substantive step in the recovery of the history of the Edenton women came in the 1830s, when Peter Force rediscovered and then published one of the original newspaper reports about them. An accomplished collector of American historical documents, Force was authorized by Congress in 1833 to compile *American Archives*, a multivolume documentary collection spanning the colonial and Revolutionary eras. In 1837 Force published the "Association signed by Ladies of Edenton, North Carolina," in its entirety, but without the list of signers. Although he did not disclose his source, Force duly noted that the Edenton declaration had been "Signed by fifty-one Ladies."[28]

Force's impact was significant, at least among writers and readers of history. North Carolinian Hugh Williamson did not mention the Edenton women when he wrote the first post-Revolutionary history of his state in 1812. Decades later, however, when George Bancroft published the fourth volume of his influential *History of the United States*, in which he accepted the authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration, one commentator noted that though the New Englander had added "a new feather to [North Carolina's] State cap of pride," the Mecklenburg episode was "not her only claim to patriotic distinction." Bancroft's critic then went on to tell the story of the "twelve or fifteen" Edenton "ladies" who gave up their tea and the subsequent discovery of the glass depiction of them. Although none of the Edenton women appeared in Elizabeth Ellet's pioneering three-volume midcentury biographical collection *Women of the American Revolution*, John H. Wheeler reprinted the entire text of the women's statement from Force's volume when he published the next important history of North Carolina in 1851.[29]

With one possible exception, the Edenton signers apparently did not publicize their history in the post-Revolutionary era. That exception was Sarah Valentine, who was mentioned in two articles that appeared in the late 1840s in the *Carolina Watchman*, a newspaper published in Salisbury, in Rowan County, more than two hundred miles from Edenton. Although these articles mainly retold the story of Commodore Rodgers and the glass picture, each began by setting the scene as follows: "One evening a number of ladies (twelve or fifteen) had accidentally met at a house to spend a social evening, and when the tea was handed round, one of the ladies remarked, that for one she would be willing not to taste a drop of tea as long as England should continue to oppress them

by heavy taxation." The *Watchman* did not explicitly cite Sarah Valentine as the source of this information, but she was the only signer mentioned by name, described as "the last survivor of this 'tea meeting,' [who] died a few years since aged 88."[30]

Although this version of the story makes the Edenton women's actions appear more genteel and less purposeful than they probably were, the *Watchman* apparently was the only post-Revolutionary North Carolina newspaper that gave them any coverage whatsoever. The political orientation of Hamilton Jones, the paper's editor, made him sympathetic to politically minded "ladies." Jones was a committed member of the Whig party—the party that opposed Andrew Jackson's Democrats—and he founded the *Watchman* in part to express his partisan views. In the 1840s prominent Whigs were unusually welcoming to female supporters because they believed that the influence of virtuous women could make politics and society more civil and orderly. Jones's notion of the Edenton ladies mixing patriotism with genteel sociability fit that model admirably.[31]

Like the destruction of the tea in Boston Harbor in 1773, which was not celebrated as the "Tea Party" until a half-century later when workingmen reclaimed the Revolutionary contributions of non-elites to legitimize their own political activism, the Edenton story became more widely known after the Civil War, when elite and middling white women emerged as creators and custodians of a celebratory history of the Confederacy and its Old South antecedents. These women honored Confederate men as defenders of southern patriarchy and white supremacy, but they also sought to portray their foremothers as men's partners in creating and preserving southern civilization. What was in one respect a progressive effort to reclaim the history of the Edenton women, then, was part of a larger cultural project that enlisted historical memory in the cause of reinvigorating antebellum social hierarchies. From this perspective, one highlight of North Carolina's early history was the birth of Virginia Dare in 1587 at the "Lost Colony" of Roanoke. Ignored or downplayed in earlier histories, the birth of this "first infant child of pure Caucasian blood" was now routinely lauded as the advent of "the white race in the Western Hemisphere."[32]

Concerted efforts to commemorate the Edenton women began after local historian Richard Dillard attempted to recover and tell their story in the 1890s. Dillard's sources were limited: he knew only about the Iredell letter, the glass picture, and the unsigned document from Force's *American Archives*. In an often-reprinted essay, first published in 1892, however, Dillard created what became the standard narrative of the episode. The "ladies," he explained, convened at the home of Elizabeth King, where they drank a "vile" infusion of local raspberry leaves instead of the forbidden tea. Dillard also claimed to

have discovered the names of five of the Edenton signers, only two of whom—Penelope Barker and Sarah Valentine—were, in fact, correct. Most important, Dillard was the first to call the gathering a "tea-party," a designation that recast it as a patriotic parlor game by domesticating, and therefore legitimating, the women's actions. "The drafting of such resolutions, so directly antagonistic to royal authority," he wrote approvingly, "required a calmer . . . courage than that developed by the . . . feverish bravery of martial music." Dillard maintained that the Edenton women appropriately and patriotically defended their domestic spheres by decorously protesting taxes and policies that "affected every hearthstone in the province."[33]

Dillard's formulation of virtuous women acting patriotically while remaining within their prescribed sphere appealed to the state's female practitioners of organized patriotism, especially the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the competing Daughters of the Revolution (DR). Well educated, historically minded, and generally conservative in their social outlook, members of these groups believed woman's nature differed fundamentally from man's, but they also fervently advocated women's involvement in civic life. In the gender-based division of public labor they favored, men voted but even the most cogent and civic-minded women did not. As DR member Elvira Moffitt put it, even as she argued publicly in favor of improving the state's schools, "We women do not want the privilege of voting, we prefer the quietude of home where we must do our duty." At a time when many women, even in the southern states, clamored for the vote, the so-called Edenton ladies' tea party offered antisuffrage forces an appealingly domesticated model of female citizenship. The Edenton ladies were "true noble refined women who fulfilled the duty of the home yet forgot not their country," declared Mary Hilliard Hinton, adding, "Can the daughters of today act unwisely in following such examples?"[34]

In 1900, inspired by Dillard's essay, the DAR and DR resolved to erect a memorial to the Edenton women, well aware that "the history of mothers, even of the greatest men, is not easy to obtain." One problem was money, which they raised by publishing and selling a historical magazine, the *North Carolina Booklet*. A bigger problem, as it turned out, was identifying the fifty-one signers whose names were to be inscribed on the memorial. Dillard continued his research, as did Oren Smith of Henderson and J. B. Hunter of Durham, who "by diligent inquiry among the old inhabitants and laborious examinations of tombstones and other records" by 1901 came up with twenty-one names, in addition to Dillard's original five. Hunter soon expanded the list to fifty-two names, which the DR showcased in the *Booklet* in 1903. A year later, however, New Yorker Richard Halsey published a book that reproduced not only the Dawe mezzotint but also the 1774 article from London's *Morning Chronicle* with the list of signers. Fanny

DeBerniere Hooper Whitaker, the DR regent who had emerged as the leader of the memorial effort, consulted an English Iredell descendant who verified Halsey's list, but both she and Dillard remained unconvinced. "It is cause for deep regret that these names are . . . obscured by the mists of a hundred and thirty-one years," Whitaker observed pointedly one year after the publication of Halsey's book, "instead of being blazoned high on the roll of fame, like those of their successors, the Signers of the Mecklenburg & National Declarations."[35]

By 1906 the women had enough money for their memorial, but they had two conflicting rosters of putative signers. The list that appeared in the official publication of Whitaker's organization, the *North Carolina Booklet*, contained only seven names that were among those published in 1774. Among the names the *Booklet* list included was Elizabeth King, the meeting's supposed hostess. It also contained the names of Mary Hooper and Hester Cross, ancestors of Fanny Whitaker and Richard Dillard, respectively, though tax records reveal that no one named either Hooper or Cross lived in Chowan County in 1774. Indeed, the *Booklet* listed the names of many women whose surnames did not appear on the colonial tax lists. Relying on oral history and local tradition, Whitaker and her associates compiled a list of signers made up of ancestors of area residents who were eager to see their foremothers enshrined in the pantheon of Revolutionary heroines and whose families, in the twentieth century, were sufficiently respectable to convince Whitaker and others that they were descended from genteel, tea-drinking ladies.[36]

In the end, the memorial's sponsors were torn between the visceral appeal of local tradition and the seemingly solid, if unsatisfying, evidence Richard Halsey had published. Because Whitaker's group planned to immortalize the Edenton ladies by engraving their names on their memorial, the confusion delayed its completion for at least a year. Finally, on Saturday, October 24, 1908, one day before the 134th anniversary of the Edenton meeting, a bronze plaque commemorating the event was unveiled in the rotunda of the state capitol in Raleigh. The style of the oval plaque was decidedly domestic: a bas-relief of a teapot decorated with the image of the "tea-party house" surrounded by a floral wreath. Its legend did not name names, instead merely saluting the "fifty-one ladies of Edenton, who, by their patriotism, zeal and early protest against British authority assisted our forefathers in the making of this republic and our commonwealth."[37]

The Edenton women and their memorial are important for several reasons. In 1774 the women's actions, however genteel, were unique, even radical. Penelope Barker and her associates clearly envisioned themselves as members of the polity who had political opinions and obligations—and they were willing to say so

publicly and in writing. At a time when there were no formal women's associations, Edenton's female leaders forged links with women outside their immediate circle of family and friends, across social lines, to organize support for the congress and for colonial resistance to British imperial policies. At a time when even most men could neither vote nor hold political office, these sorts of activities were the most vital forms of peaceful political expression for anyone, male or female, outside the male gentry elite.

In a twentieth-century context, when all white men could vote and many women aspired to suffrage, the actions of the Edenton women seemed quaint and safely domestic. The belated invention of the "Edenton tea party" conjured a circle of fifty-one ladies who decorously and spontaneously followed men's political lead, honoring the women less for their political consciousness or organizational skills than for what their commemorators interpreted as a distinctively feminine form of patriotism. Paradoxically, women who were at the forefront of Revolutionary politics in 1774 were memorialized as exemplars of a conservative, even reactionary, tradition of female patriotism by their staunchest modern admirers.

NOTES

1. Alfred F. Young, "The Women of Boston: 'Persons of Consequence' in the Making of the American Revolution," in Harriet B. Applewhite and Darline G. Levy, eds., *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 195–96.

2. See especially Inez Parker Cumming, "The Edenton Ladies' Tea Party," *Georgia Review* 8 (1954): 389–91; and Richard Dillard, *The Historic Tea-Party of Edenton* (1892; Norfolk, Va.: Burke & Gregory, 1907), 5–8. Recent recapitulations include Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Herring Wilson, *North Carolina Women: Making History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 49–51.

3. Jaquelin Drane Nash, "Dawson, John," in William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 6 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979–96), 2:44 (hereafter *DNCB*); Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews, eds., *Journal of a Lady of Quality* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934), 155.

4. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon, eds.), November 3, 1774, postscript.

5. Ibid., December 24, 1767, January 20, 1773, June 16, 1774. See also Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), chap. 3.

6. *Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, January 16, 1775.

7. Ibid.

8. Arthur Iredell to James Iredell, January 31, 1775, in Don Higginbotham, ed., *The Papers of James Iredell* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1976–), 1:282, 285–86n; Higginbotham, "Iredell, James, Sr.," in *DNCB*, 3:253.

9. Timothy Clayton and Anita McConnell, "Dawe, Philip (1745?–1809?)," *Oxford Dictionary of*

National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/article/7330 (accessed January 13, 2011).

10. Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 18–19, 129, 131–32.

11. Thomas C. Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County, North Carolina* (Edenton, N.C.: Edenton Chamber of Commerce, 1967), 25–27, 29; Don Higginbotham, "The Making of a Revolutionary," in Higginbotham, xxxix–xli; Bishir and Southern, *Guide to Historic Architecture*, 126, 129, 136; Will of John Green, November 10, 1779, Chowan County will book A, 1761–98, 318, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh (hereafter NDCAH); Edenton Women's Club, *Historic Edenton and Countryside* (Edenton, N.C.: Chowan Herald, 1953), 22, in *Eastern North Carolina Digital Library*, http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction/item.aspx?id=hea (accessed May 20, 2013); Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 2.

Unless otherwise noted, demographic information is based on the Chowan County tax lists, 1774, NCDAH. Because tax assessors listed only heads of households and counted only "tithables"—white men and blacks of both sexes over the age of sixteen—population figures are estimated. The state census of 1784–87 listed the population of Chowan County as 3,782 (2,074 "white" and 1,708 "black") and Edenton's as 1,112 (480 "white" and 632 "black"). See William L. Saunders et al., eds., *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, 30 vols. (Raleigh, Winston, Goldsboro, and Charlotte: various publishers, 1886–1911), 18:433–34.

12. On the Bertie signers, see Bertie County Inventories and Sales of Estates, 1775–1790, 117, NCDAH; Penelope Dawson to Samuel Johnston, August 28, 1774, Johnston Family Papers/Hayes Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC); Higginbotham, 1:286n; "Johnston of Southdean and Dundee," Genealogy Vertical File, NCDAH. For possible signers from Perquimans, Mary Hoskins Blount and Grace Clayton, see Ellen Goode Rawlings Winslow, *History of Perquimans County* (1931; Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1974), 301, 327.

13. Michael G. Martin Jr., "Barker, Penelope," in *DNCB*, 1:95–96; Will of Thomas Barker, October 16, 1786, Lewis Thompson Papers, SHC; Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early South* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), esp. 3–11; "Blenheim Manor House," http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/chowan/photos/blenheim983ph.txt (accessed May 20, 2013).

14. "The Edenton Tea Party," *North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register* 2 (July 1901): 458n (hereafter *NCHGR*); Penelope Dawson to Samuel Johnston, August 28, 1774, Johnston Family Papers/Hayes Collection, SHC; Bond of Andrew Know and Jean Blair, December 22, 1774, ibid.; Edenton Women's Club, 19; Higginbotham, 1:286n; "Johnston of Southdean and Dundee," Genealogy Vertical File, NCDAH; Anna Withers Bair, "Johnston, Samuel," in *DNCB*, 3:306–8.

15. John Wesley Curry, *The Bonners of Chowan County, North Carolina* (Greenville, N.C.: Forefathers Press, 1995), 54, 80–81, 92, 93; "Division of Estates, Chowan County," *NCHGR* 2 (April 1901): 260; Will of Anne Anderson, September 17, 1783, Chowan County will book A, 1760–1798, 152, NCDAH; Martin, "Barker, Penelope," in *DNCB*, 1:95.

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Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Low Country (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 244–54.

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19. Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), esp. chap. 6; Wayne E. Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), esp. 43–44.

20. Richard Creecy Benbury, *Grandfather's Tales of North Carolina History* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, Printers, 1901), 36; [Salisbury] *North Carolina Watchman*, August 5, 1847; "Penelope Barker," *North Carolina Booklet* 8 (1908): 279.

21. Edenton Women's Club, 10, 18, 25; William S. Powell, "Jones, Thomas," in *DNCB*, 3:238; Griffith J. McKee, *The Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1857–58), 1:143, 160, 161, 163, 164. Abigail and Jasper Charlton witnessed the will of Margaret Pearson's husband ("Abstract of Bertie County Wills," *NCHGR* 2 [July 1901]: 351).

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25. Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); *Raleigh Register*, July 22, 1805; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 82–84; Cynthia A. Kierner, "Genteel Balls and Republican Parades: Gender and Early Southern Civic Rituals, 1677–1826," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104 (1996): 202–3.

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"The Printed Image in the West: Mezzotint," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mztn/hd_mztn.htm [accessed January 13, 2011]).

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29. Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812); "The Old North State," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 25, 1849, 4; John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina: From 1584 to 1851*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1851), 1:90–91; Wheeler to Benson Lossing, February 2, 1852, John Hill Wheeler Letter, Special Collections, Duke University Library; Elizabeth F. Ellet, *The Women of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1848–50).

30. [Salisbury] *Carolina Watchman*, August 5, 1847, October 4, 1849; "Division of Estates, Chowan County," *NCHGR* 2 (April 1901): 271; "Marriage Bonds," *NCHGR* 1 (April 1900): 246.

31. Paul Christian Jones, "Jones, Hamilton C.," in *American National Biography*, http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-02948.html (accessed January 13, 2011); Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), chap. 3.

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33. Dillard, *Historic Tea-Party of Edenton*, 5–6, 10, 12–13. Inez Parker Cumming's account drew heavily on Dillard's, though Cumming maintained that Barker was the president of an organization called the Edenton Ladies' Patriotic Guild. There is no evidence to support that claim.

34. Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 140–43, 156–57; Mary Hilliard Hinton, "North Carolina's Historical Exhibit at the Jamestown Exhibition," *North Carolina Booklet* 7 (1907): 144.

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36. "Edenton Tea Party," 122; Fanny DeBerniere Hooper Whitaker notes, ca. 1904–6, Daughters of the American Revolution Papers, SHC; William S. Powell, "Richard Dillard," in *DNCB*, 2:69.

37. Moffitt, "N.C. Daughters," 150; "Unveiling the Edenton Tea Party Tablet," *North Carolina Booklet* 8 (1908): 266, 282.

Sister Anna

An African Woman in Early North Carolina

JON SENSBACH

A worn but legible notebook housed in an archive in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, contains an unusual and precious document: the "Diary of the Negro Congregation in and around Salem." A record of one of the state's earliest African American churches founded during the slavery period, the diary, kept by white ministers from the Moravian Church, describes baptisms, deaths, worship services, musical performances, and relations among congregants, most of whom were enslaved. It all adds up to a rare account of African American religious life before the Civil War. Lives emerge from these pages that might otherwise be lost to us. One of those was an elderly congregant named Anna, who died on September 4, 1829.

Recording her obituary in the diary, minister Abraham Steiner wrote in the German script characteristic of the Moravian immigrants who had settled in North Carolina in the mid-eighteenth century. His description of Anna began like this: "She was born in Africa and brought to this land as a slave when she was young. Here she lived in several places until she came to Salem more than fifty years ago, where she was baptized and admitted into Holy Communion."[1] After arriving in Salem, the minister continued, she married another African-born Moravian named Christian, who died just a few years later, and she lived a widow for the next forty years. "She was faithful and punctual in the work assigned to her and was treated more like a maid than as a slave [*lieber Dienstmagd als Sklavin behandelt*]," Steiner noted. "She had her peculiarities, but when one learned to know her better, one found that she knew in whom she believed and in whom she placed her trust, and she put up with all kinds of rudeness. . . . Her age must have been more than eighty years."[2]

However brief, Steiner's memorial is important for its record of the life and death of an African woman at a time when African-born survivors of the Atlan-

tic slave trade were becoming ever fewer in the American population. If Anna came to America on a slave ship as a young girl and was about eighty at the time of her death, she would probably have arrived in British colonial America sometime during the 1760s, at the height of the trade when tens of thousands of Africans made the forced voyage each year. Yet of the millions of enslaved African women brought to the Americas in the nearly four-hundred-year history of the slave trade, few are known to historians or to the public. One exception is the famous Bostonian poet Phillis Wheatley, who also was brought to America as a girl at roughly the same time as Anna, but who, in all her atypicality, has become a sort of stand-in for all African women. Whereas African men such as Olaudah Equiano, Venture Smith, and James Albert Gronniasaw left a small but valuable canon of memoirs describing their experience of enslavement, almost no women left such narratives, and other biographical information about African women under slavery is scant.[3]

Such archival gaps are not accidental. As historians such as Deborah Gray White and others have noted, the relative scarcity of sources about enslaved women reflects their own inability and lack of opportunity to document their own lives as well as the attitude of the record-keeping planters and officials who viewed them with the racial scorn that underlay the very system of slavery itself. But it also indicates what White calls black women's "culture of dissemblance"—their own strategies to avoid drawing attention to themselves, which, they knew, only brought trouble. Thus, we might think of critical holes in the documentary record concerning black women under slavery as "articulate silences" that reveal even as they conceal.[4]

Thus, Abraham Steiner's obituary provides a valuable entry point into the life of one such woman. In fact, though she had no opportunity to leave a written statement herself, Anna left more archival footprints than one might expect. As a baptized church member, she appears in numerous Moravian records, including baptismal and marriage registers, church diaries, and official reports. While significant gaps in the record remain, enough information exists to reconstruct something of the life of one African woman's experiences in American captivity. Many of those experiences were not necessarily any more typical of enslaved women than Phillis Wheatley's. Anna lived in an immigrant German community in English-speaking America; she worked in small-scale domestic service rather than on a large plantation; and as a Christian "Sister" she worshiped alongside white co-religionists whose church covenant afforded her certain rights and protections unavailable to most women under slavery. Still, while the details of her life story were unusual, she faced the same challenge as all enslaved women of securing herself as best she could in a world that was

LOG CHURCH BUILT IN 1823 BY BLACK MORAVIAN CONGREGANTS IN SALEM

This church, which Sister Anna attended, sat beside the black graveyard at the southern end of the community.

African Moravian Log Church—Lot 104, c. 1890. Collection of Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Winston-Salem, N.C.

especially hostile to them. Her capture in Africa, her forced passage to America, and her struggle to survive were experiences she shared with millions of captive Africans. Though she was neither an overt rebel against slavery nor a prominent public figure, Anna's life offers a relatively well-documented example of how displaced African women met those challenges. Paradoxically finding an early refuge within the culture of her enslavers, she later rejected that increasingly hostile sanctum in favor of a more welcoming African American religious community.

Anna's life unfolded at the unusual intersection of the slave trade, evangelical religion, and German migration to eighteenth-century America. When she first arrived in Salem in the months before the American victory at Yorktown in 1781, the town was just fifteen years old, a small settlement on the southern frontier for a pacifist religious group seeking refuge and freedom of worship. The Moravian Church, whose formal name was the Renewed Unity of Brethren, originated in Bohemia in the early fifteenth century as followers of the martyred reformer Jan Hus. Driven underground by persecution for nearly three centuries, the remnants of this early Protestant group emerged in 1722 to take shelter in Saxony on the estate of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Under Zinzendorf's leadership, the Brethren's emphasis on emotion, faith, and experience over formal learning made them an influential force in the burgeoning transatlantic revivals of the 1730s. During that decade the group began establishing settlements in North America as missionary bases to Native Americans and as havens from continued persecution in Europe. After a five-year stay in colonial Georgia, the Brethren migrated to Pennsylvania to found the communal town of Bethlehem in 1741. In 1753 a party of Moravians settled on a hundred-thousand-acre tract of land in west central North Carolina called die Wachau, later Anglicized to Wachovia. The first town built there, Bethabara, was followed by Bethania, in 1759, and Salem, in 1766, which soon became the religious, administrative, and economic center of the Moravian settlement. To live in these communities was to belong to an exclusive group pursuing a divine calling. Believers called each other Brother and Sister; outsiders were *Fremden*, or strangers, to be kept at arm's length.[5]

The 1730s also saw the beginning of what would become the Moravians' long and complex association with African slavery in the Americas. They were among the first Protestant missionaries to proselytize among enslaved Africans throughout the Danish, Dutch, and British West Indies, where their successful missions strongly influenced subsequent generations of Methodist and Anglican evangelicals. Against frequent opposition from planters, they vigorously advocated for the right of "the heathen" to seek Christian salvation. But they

were no antislavery activists and, like many Europeans, believed not only that slavery had been ordained by God but that Africans had been consigned by divine fate to perpetual bondage. Throughout their mission efforts they reassured planters that their biblical teachings would bolster the plantation order, not threaten it. Throughout the Caribbean, Moravian missionaries bought plantations and slaves for their support, and in their Pennsylvania and North Carolina settlements the Brethren bought slaves to help with the high demand for labor in constructing new villages and farms.

Theirs was a controlled turn to slave labor, however. Church leaders in what was essentially a theocratic polity sought to restrict the ownership and use of slaves for fear that dependence on slaves would encourage idleness, and thus ungodliness, among white workers. Individuals in the "congregation towns" of Salem and Bethabara were not allowed to own slaves; instead, the Moravian Church owned most slaves and leased them to tradesmen or proprietors who needed workers. In the countryside, more relaxed rules allowed church members greater latitude in slave ownership. Slaves composed a versatile segment of the labor force in the diversified Moravian economy, though they rarely exceeded about 10 percent of workers through the early nineteenth century. A few worked in skilled trades such as pottery, blacksmithing, and tanning. Many served as domestics in white Moravian homes and taverns. Slaves cleared land and cultivated crops on Moravian farms. By the time of the 1790 census North Carolina Moravians owned thirty-five slaves, a number that increased to seventy-one by 1802, relatively low figures compared with the large plantations of the eastern Carolinas or Chesapeake, but the Brethren supplemented these workers with dozens of slaves hired from non-Moravian slave owners in the surrounding countryside. Though it is probably more accurate to describe the Moravian settlement as a society with slaves rather than a slave society dependent on forced labor, enslaved workers nonetheless contributed a substantial degree of labor and talent to building and maintaining the Moravians' godly refuge in America.[6]

In July 1781 tavern keeper Jacob Meyer needed domestic help and sought a slave for the work. Salem lay on an east–west thoroughfare and the tavern was an important source of revenue from travelers. But church leaders, who wanted to shield congregants from the worldly ways of outsiders, were suspicious of taverns and reluctant to expose female Sisters to their rowdiness. So Meyer traveled fifty miles south to Salisbury, North Carolina, to purchase a slave, and returned with Anna, or Patty, as she was called at the time. "Brother Meyer has obtained a Negro woman, twenty to thirty years old, in Salisbury for the Inn," noted the minutes of the Elders' Conference, which recorded financial and spiritual affairs

of the town. Crucially, the board added, "she has a good character" and was thus presumably suitable for tavern service. A bill of sale from the transaction, still preserved in the Moravian archives, reveals that Meyer purchased Patty from Matthew Troy of Salisbury for one hundred pounds. Though technically she was the property of the church, Meyer was to be her master in the tavern.[7]

Entombed within the dry details of this kind of financial exchange is the unrecorded story of a life that had been repeatedly violated in its twenty to thirty years. There is no way to know from what part of Africa Patty came, what her original name was, how large her family had been, how and by whom she was captured and bundled aboard the slave ship, what her experience of the voyage was like, where she arrived in America, and how she ended up in Salisbury. What we can say is that she endured the same violent displacement that millions of African captives in America shared and that one person who undoubtedly retained a child's vivid memories of the Middle Passage now found herself in a strange German settlement in the middle of North Carolina trying to make out another unintelligible language.[8]

The hard work of cooking, cleaning, mending, gardening, and serving at the tavern no doubt demanded all her attention and skill. But Patty's main task was to survive in this new place, to forge new family or friendships, and to bypass the social exclusion of being black and enslaved in a society of free European settlers bonded by a common religious and cultural identity. Had she been on a plantation two hundred miles to the east, she would have found herself in a large slave community where companionship was readily available and where West African religion, language, kinship, and foodways were at least partly reconstituted. Working in a rice or tobacco field would have been even more exhausting, and the treatment crueler, than what she found among the Moravians, but surrounded by many more people in similar straits, the dispossessed in plantation settings had more options to overcome the alienation or "social death" of enslavement. In Salem, Patty now found herself isolated and alone.[9]

Or so it must have seemed at first, amid the earnest Germans. Neither she nor most of them spoke English well, and she probably struggled to pick up even a few rudimentary words in German. In time, however, she would have noticed that there were small numbers of enslaved people in town whom she might befriend, including at least one other African, named Abraham, who worked in the tannery nearby. Abraham, then known as Sambo, had arrived in Salem in 1771 and lived much of the next decade in various stages of unhappiness and defiance, which included several attempts to run away. In that regard, he was like thousands of other African Americans during the Revolutionary period who attempted to flee bondage, many in response to British offers of freedom

for slaves of American rebels. While the Moravians tried to remain neutral during the Revolutionary War, they detected an increase in restiveness among their slaves, and in the mid-1770s, these pacifists quietly armed themselves against the fear of "Negro rebellion." None happened, however, and within a few years Sambo evidently decided to exchange resistance for assimilation as a strategy for confronting bonded life among the Moravians. Religion was his vehicle for doing so. "He started to think about the status of his soul, attended Congregation meetings diligently, and was eager to learn German and verses," his *Lebenslauf*, or life story, later attested. He repeatedly asked to be baptized and was eventually granted his request in 1780, becoming christened as Abraham and inducted into the Salem congregation. Sambo certainly took notice of Patty's arrival in town, for in November 1782 the Board of Elders "noted that the Negro Abraham has an eye to marrying the Negro woman in the Inn." They preferred, however, that church members marry other Christians, which Patty was not. Besides, for reasons they did not explain, they wanted to match her with another African, a baptized church member named Christian, in Bethabara.[10]

Probably observing the example of these individuals and a handful of other enslaved people who joined the Moravian church, Patty evidently decided to follow suit. In November 1782 the Elders reported that "the Negro woman in the Inn has been permitted to attend a Lovefeast," which was an important ritual meal designed to promote harmony and fellowship. A few weeks later they noted that "the Negro woman at the Inn has asked repeatedly about baptism." They were encouraged by Patty's interest but wanted to bring her along slowly. "She should be given instruction first of all. Because of her broken language, there is no one here whom she can understand better than Sister Meyer. We should therefore commission her to give the Negro woman understanding of the Holy Baptism and of what the Savior has done for us and suffered for us. When this has occurred, a brief doctrinal instruction will follow. Sister Marshall will visit her frequently in order to encourage her." The lessons must have continued for some time with no resolution, for in July 1783, the Elders described Patty as still "very troubled about Holy Baptism and has urgently requested it. The necessary instruction in the redeeming truths and in Holy Baptism will be imparted to her by Brother Fritz in the English language, which she understands best."[11]

Why Patty and other Africans in the Moravian settlement pushed insistently for baptism cannot be known for certain, but their reasons must have involved either a religious attraction to Christianity, a calculated strategy to improve their lives and social standing, or some combination of these considerations. Like all Africans brought as slaves to America, Patty had to stay alert to any

possibilities to improve her situation. It would have been obvious to her and others that all social, economic, and spiritual advantages in this closed society accrued to insiders, against distrust and disdain for those on the outside. Baptism, symbolizing the erasure of one's former existence and a "new birth" into Christian fellowship, brought enslaved people into this inner circle. For people leading socially marginalized lives, not even recognized as fully human by white Brethren, incorporating themselves into the Moravian community heralded social resurrection. In spiritual terms, membership in such a congregation could not replace or duplicate the circle of gods, ancestors, and kin that Africans such as Abraham and Patty had left behind. But it signified a chance to belong to a new kind of family.

These kinds of interracial religious families had been emerging throughout the South, and to some extent in the North as well, since before the Revolution. By the mid-1750s, evangelical Baptist and Methodist congregations in particular were increasingly peopled by enslaved and free black members attracted by the appeal of Christian egalitarianism that was often reflected in more just social practice. In some ways the most vulnerable members of slave society, many black women were drawn to these churches for the promise of spiritual equality, to find protection from abusive masters, and to gain opportunities for lay preaching and leadership.[12]

Accordingly, baptism brought enslaved women and men into the intricate social world of Moravian congregational life. The church sought to instill a sense of group solidarity through a ceaseless succession of church services, prayer meetings, and festivities, as well as through the so-called choir system, which was the organization of congregations according to age, sex, and condition in life. In all of these activities, black Brothers and Sisters participated fully as members of the fellowship. Of course, if they hoped such participation might be an avenue to legal freedom, it was not. One enslaved aspirant to the church was pointedly told that baptism "does not mean that he becomes free and the equal of his master." Nonetheless, it did bring about the seeming anomaly—though the Moravians did not regard it as such—of legally enslaved congregants being considered spiritual equals with European Brethren in the inner circle of the chosen. Conceiving of themselves as a primitive church in the image of the earliest Christians, black and white Brethren shared church benches, took communion together, exchanged the ritual kiss of peace, laid hands on the other's shoulders, and washed one another's feet. For enslaved members, the material advantages of this system were immediate and transparent. They gained protection and status in the workplace, and their marriages, though not legally recognized in North Carolina courts, were sanctified in the community's eyes

and were guaranteed not to be split up by sale. Such an arrangement required not simply a kind of reconciliation with enslavement but a different approach to the problem of enslavement altogether than that offered by perilous tactics such as escape or rebellion. From the slaves' vantage point, it must have made a good deal of sense to join the culture of their masters rather than defy it overtly. And from the church's perspective, that concession was an effective form of social control over the slave population.[13]

Patty's situation also reflected the intricate connections between baptism and marriage for black worshipers in this religious society. The church had the power to arrange, or at least to control, marriages for all congregants, black and white. The Elders negotiated a complex process involving the wishes of prospective partners, the church's interests, and God's presumed will as determined by the drawing of lots. Marriages could be arranged in several ways. A single man who wished to marry had to approach the Elders and to propose a match. If they deemed the proposal suitable, they put it to the Sister in question. If she agreed, the Elders sought final approval from the lot, whereby a "yes" or "no" slip of paper was drawn blindly, which was taken to be God's verdict. The process could break down at a number of stages. The Elders could find the proposed match unsuitable or not in the church's interest. The young woman could decline the offer, or a negative lot could be drawn. In some cases the Elders decided that certain people ought to be married, again negotiating with both. The intricate process guaranteed individuals a say in their matrimony, although women were not allowed to initiate the marriage proposal. In theory, no one married against his or her will. In practice, the church could exert considerable pressure on a reluctant prospective partner to acquiesce if the Elders deemed a proposed match advantageous for the community.[14]

Black church members who wished to marry, or whom the Elders thought should marry, had to pass through this same elaborate series of steps. As Patty prepared for baptism, the Elders sought to find her a husband, and the match they had in mind was not Abraham, but Christian, who had arrived in the Moravian settlement in 1771. According to his *Lebenslauf*, Christian "was born in Guinea and as a small boy was brought to a ship by a relative and sold, and taken to South Carolina to serve different masters." He was transferred from Salem to tavern service in Bethabara, and after indicating several years later "through his broken words that he stood in close communion with the Savior," he was baptized in 1780. In weighing the potential marriage triangle between the three Africans—Patty, Christian, and Abraham—it appears the Elders did not necessarily consider African ethnicity a factor as much as the suitability of the marriage for the church's advantage. Instead, it is more likely the Elders

wanted to find a mate for Patty who would live and work with her in the tavern. As a Sister-in-waiting, Patty needed to be married to serve in the tavern. Church leaders wanted Sisters who served there to be married and their husbands to serve there with them, if possible, to counteract the tavern's corruptions. As an experienced tavern helper, the Elders might have reasoned, Christian would make a more suitable match than Abraham, who was too valuable to move from the tannery.[15]

Thus, in November 1783 the Elders decided that "the marriage of the Negro Patty to the Negro Christian should take place the sooner the better. And so one day soon we should arrange for the latter to come to Salem to discuss the matter with Patty." Christian made the six-mile trip from Bethabara to see Patty in what might well have been the first meeting between the two, and both parties agreed to the match. In early December "Brother Fritz married our Negro Brother Christian, of Bethabara, to the Negress Patty, who is a candidate for baptism. The marriage took place at the tavern." As a capstone to this elaborate matchmaking dance, Patty finally gained her long-awaited admission to the church a few weeks later. Even this step required one final approval. In response to the question of whether Patty should be baptized, the Elders blindly drew a "yes" lot, signaling God's assent. And from a list of possible baptismal names including Elisabeth, Dorothea, Anna, Sarah, and Johannah, they drew Anna. At last, on Christmas Day, December 25, 1783, "in the evening the married Negress Patty was baptized, receiving the name of Anna." Her baptismal sponsors, or spiritual godparents, were the women of the Elders' Conference and her mentor, Sister Meyer of the tavern. Enslaved in body, Anna was now a Sister in the fellowship of God's elect.[16]

Still, one step remained in this spiritual journey—acceptance into Communion, the highest stage of devotion to Christ. Here again, the path forward was not simple. Anna underwent further instruction and observation to satisfy the Elders that her basic knowledge of Christianity was sound and that her yearning for its rewards was genuine. Six weeks after her baptism, the Elders asked the lot whether Anna should be considered a candidate for communion, and drew a "yes," though no timetable was set as her preparation continued. By June 1784 the Elders were satisfied enough with her progress to ask the lot for permission to confirm her but drew a "no" slip. Repeating the question a month later, they pulled a positive slip, and on August 13, 1784, "Sister Anna partook of Holy communion for the first time." She had reached the inner sanctum of the Christian community.[17]

These technical procedures are more descriptive of Moravian practice than they are of Anna's state of mind or her religious beliefs. It is impossible to

know from the limited information how sincerely she and other African initiates considered themselves to have shed their former selves and been "born again" or whether they simply gave a convincing impression of doing so. It is unlikely they forgot or rejected all their African beliefs, though outwardly they gave evidence of having abandoned cultural and spiritual expressions likely to offend white Moravian sensibilities. Before joining the church, for example, Anna's husband, Christian, could be seen on the streets of Bethabara trying to earn money by dancing, or in the words of his memoir, "his peculiar turns of the body that no one could imitate." Such movements seem to have signified a desire to preserve the cultural memory of African dance customs, which must have been incongruous in the austere Moravian community. Indeed, to white Brethren, a whirling African in their midst represented both licentious idolatry as well as an exciting display of exotic heathenism that some whites would pay to see. But the Elders were pleased that after gaining "self-knowledge about his lost condition," Christian's "whole way of walking changed, he spoke few words, and when one talked to him about his spiritual state one could clearly tell from his broken words that he stood in close communion with the Saviour." His decision to forego dance and redirect his cultural expression into Christian fellowship could not have been easy. His conversion might well have been shadowed by a sense of loss, possible emotional anguish, over familiar ways sacrificed. Something like this difficult spiritual calculus might have accompanied Anna's transition to Christianity as well.[18]

In this regard, fragmentary communion records provide grounds for speculation about the pair's engagement with Christianity. For Moravians, communion, as the apex of the Christian miracle, was a time for glorious celebration and renewal, not a place to vent doubts and weakness. Those who felt themselves less than in thrall to Christ's love or who had committed infractions or sins were encouraged to keep away from communion; as punishment they could also be barred from the sacrament indefinitely until their demeanor improved. Elders viewed such fluctuations in spiritual enthusiasm as part of the normal ebb and flow of human imperfection and were more concerned with backsliders' progress toward improvement than with inflicting lasting punishment. Records from the 1780s show the African Moravian couple Anna and Christian being held out, or holding themselves out, of communion regularly before being readmitted, always for unexplained reasons. According to the Elders' reports, for example, on February 19, 1785, "Anna will remain away from Communion," while on April 16 of that year, "Christian and Patty will remain away from Communion on their own conviction." It is unclear whether the diarist referred to Anna by her prebaptismal name, Patty, on purpose to signal

disapproval, but the pattern began to emerge. Anna and Christian often stayed out of communion for months at a time, though the Elders never mentioned any lasting concern or desire to ban them from church altogether.[19]

It is at least possible that this uneven record of attendance reflected lingering ambivalence, or even dissatisfaction, by both Anna and Christian about Moravian Christianity as both religious system and social practice. It might even have been a kind of thumbing of the nose that carefully stopped short of outright punishable dissent. The Moravian records portray a continual pas-de-deux between African American and white Brethren over the limits of black assertion. On one occasion, the Elders warned a white proprietor, Brother Blum, "to treat his Negro Peter more sternly than he has in the past so that he does not overstep his bounds." An Elder was dispatched to tell Peter "that he must, as a Negro, behave in obedience to the regulations and that we shall try to sell him if he does not do so." But there were obligations on white Brethren as well, for the Elders admonished Peter's master that, "just as Peter must be obedient, so he must treat this Negro humanely." Anna and Christian positioned themselves through baptism in such a negotiated arrangement that amounted to a kind of contract between themselves and the church. They had worked hard to gain access to the closest thing possible to a guarantee of humane treatment, and if their abstention from communion expressed a coded protest against Christianity or against the church for their enslavement, they knew when to stop short.[20]

Still, church officials were not entirely happy with them. They had been working and probably living for several years in the Bethabara tavern, a busy way station for travelers along the north–south Great Wagon Road, when complaints arose about their performance. In 1787 their supervisor, Christian Loesch, asked "that the Negro couple Christian and Anna, who have not been useful to him in the Tavern, might be employed elsewhere." The Elders gave no details about Loesch's dissatisfaction, so it is difficult to know whether his complaint can be categorized as the master's eternal vexation over the "laziness" of slaves. Again it is possible to suggest they had engaged in some kind of protest in the workplace. The records make no further mention of the dispute, which was no doubt resolved through the Elders' arbitration that was standard in such situations, underscoring Anna and Christian's relatively advantageous position in contrast to enslaved laborers elsewhere. Brother Loesch could not simply punish them but had to voice his complaint with the church leaders. On a Lowcountry plantation worked by gang labor, slave protest or perceived nonproductivity was often met not with arbitration but with whippings or other severe punishment. Membership in the Christian family made the difference.[21]

Anna and Christian had no children, but if they had, their children would have been incorporated into the church's social and educational structure as well. Ample evidence documents the presence of enslaved and some free black children in what might have been among the South's earliest integrated schools. There they studied the standard Moravian curriculum of reading and writing in German and English, music, mathematics, and Bible studies. At a time when many slaveholders feared that literacy would give slaves too dangerous a learning tool, the Moravians hoped for just the reverse: that literacy would help instill obedience. Black children participated in the church's choir system—or congregational division by age, sex, and marital status—by participating in group meetings with white boys and girls. One eleven-year-old enslaved girl, Anna Maria Samuel, whose parents were the first black Moravian couple in North Carolina, was even admitted into the Older Girls' Choir in Salem in 1793. She moved into the single women's dormitory facing the central square in Salem, where she lived until her death in 1798. The presence of this African American church member in the Single Sisters' House proved a striking juxtaposition of racial identity, slavery and freedom, and religious authority in one of the powerful and influential women's institutions in the early South.[22]

Children, and assisting in child rearing, seem to have been important to Anna. Abraham Steiner's obituary of her in 1829, for instance, described her as "careful and loving with little children, even though she did not have any of her own," a passage that may illuminate something about her position in the community. African-born Anna would have been raised in a culture that revered grandparents and other elders, who took an active part in child rearing. She apparently continued that tradition in America. In slave quarters everywhere, respected elders, often called "aunts" and "uncles," mentored, cared for, and passed on knowledge to the young. This form of fictive kinship was particularly important in a society where slave marriages had no legal standing and families could be sold apart at any time on the master's whim. Though black families within the Moravian Church may have enjoyed somewhat greater security, adults often served as important mentors or symbolic elders to enslaved children. This relationship was frequently formalized during the baptism of infants, when the church designated senior adults as sponsors or godparents to the children. Certain elder figures in particular, such as a woman named Priscilla in the Moravian community of Hope, about ten miles from Bethabara, were at the center of elaborate lattices of spiritual kinship for dozens of slave children. No comparable data exist for Anna, other than Steiner's description, but it appears that she and Priscilla were in effect Moravian "church mothers," traditionally the most respected and powerful women in African American churches whose

authority "derived from the kinship network found within black churches and black communities."[23]

Anna and Christian's place of relative privilege as an enslaved couple in the Moravian hierarchy proved brief. In 1789 Christian stumbled while carrying a heavy load of lumber, which crushed him. When he died a week later, his funeral at the Bethabara church drew a large crowd of black and white worshipers, and in accordance with Moravian practice, from the church balcony trombones serenaded the procession that carried his casket up a nearby hill for burial in the congregational graveyard. There Christian was buried alongside white co-religionists from the same church grouping, the married men; his gravestone, like theirs, was marked with a simple inscription identifying him as a native of Guinea.[24]

Anna, probably in her late thirties, was now a widow. Church leaders debated whether to move her out of the tavern but decided not to, and she stayed on there while remaining a resident of Bethabara. For the next thirty years, she seems to have lived quietly, appearing only sporadically in the records, so much of her subsequent life is undocumented. Several sources, however, indicate that Anna's relations with her supervisors in the workplace grew more contentious with the passage of time. Working in the Bethabara tavern in 1796, she left one day, evidently in some distress, and walked six miles to Salem to appeal to the Elders for help. The details of her dispute with the tavern master were not disclosed, but the Elders reassured her she could "go back to her workplace without fear of further consequences." Christian fellowship gave her respect and bargaining power in the workplace, which she used to file a protest and seek intervention from a third party. Enslaved members of other evangelical churches such as the Baptists and Methodists also learned to play that card to seek protection from abusive masters, often to their advantage. Anna (who for unexplained reasons was now more commonly known as Nancy) again resorted to the strategy in 1815 when she fled and sought refuge in Salem. "The Negress Nancy, who has been working for Brother and Sister Strehle in Bethabara, has come here," noted a report from the Elders, "and so far all efforts have failed to persuade her to return, or to induce the Strehles to take her back." The Elders evidently negotiated an agreement, for a week later they reported that "the Negress Nancy has returned to Bethabara and Brother and Sister Strehle have taken her back."[25]

The adjudication of the dispute revealed that Anna/Nancy had a claim to protection as a Sister. By leaving her workplace for Salem, she was committing a form of "petit marronnage," or short-term escape, that slaves throughout the Americas often staged to bargain for better working or living conditions. The

difference in Anna's case was that she sought intervention from the ultimate master, the church, playing the card of her own status as a communicant. The Elders were forced to respect the legitimacy of her appeal. Rather than punishing her or forcing her to return, they tried to "persuade" Anna as well as her supervisors, though how heavy-handed their methods were is not known. The church sought to negotiate harmony in the workplace and protection for enslaved congregants while the latter maneuvered within the zone of permissibility to make sure their rights were observed. For African American women, who were acutely vulnerable to abuses under slavery, these defenses could be valuable indeed.[26]

Despite, or perhaps because of, such assurances, Anna's relationships with her supervisors continued to deteriorate. They repeatedly complained that she was uncooperative and disruptive. In 1815 tavern keepers Johann and Maria Kummer "could not agree with her any more" and gave her to the minister of the Hope congregation, Samuel Kramsch, who believed she "might be of some help in his family." A small room was prepared for her in the loft of the Hope church. But a church committee determined that because of her "bad behavior" she had forfeited her congregational privileges, which she could regain only by "showing an improvement in her course." That improvement did not come. In June 1818 the Elders reported that Anna had "become a burden" to the Kramsches, and "they have released her and secured other help." They explained further that Anna would "stay at Brother Meinung's house until he can build a cabin for her at the Negro Quarter," which was a relatively new cluster of slave houses on a plantation outside town. The Elders reaffirmed that "because of her behavior she can no longer be a member of the congregation." Anna now found herself banished from the very church that had both enslaved and protected her for many years. Judging from her apparent refusal to heed repeated warnings, she did not seem much concerned. In fact, her actions can be seen as an ongoing protest against not only specific conditions and treatment in the workplace but against slavery itself. At heart she remained an aging African woman who did not like to be ordered around and who, short of escape, found a way to contest her subordination. In forcing the Elders' hand, she seems to have won herself some space, for they did not want to sell a baptized Sister and could do little more than bar her from fellowship.[27]

Anna waged her private war with slavery as white Brethren grew increasingly nervous about the African Americans among them. Toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth, more and more Moravians saw slave ownership as the way to wealth and advancement. In the villages and countryside around Salem, where individuals had greater latitude from the

church to buy and to own slaves, the slave population grew steadily to several hundred by the 1820s. Moravian slaveholders' fears rose correspondingly. Reports of slave conspiracies, real or imagined, elsewhere in North Carolina and in the South repeatedly reached the Moravian settlement in the early nineteenth century, and the Brethren, apprehensive about uprisings, adopted the well-established method of slave patrols to enforce order.

This tension manifested as well in cultural practices. In the 1790s some white Brethren began voicing reservations about participating as spiritual equals alongside blacks in racially mixed congregations. Church Elders quelled those protests at first, but over the next twenty years they gradually gave in to them as a newer generation of Moravians, less German in orientation and more aggressively American and southern, became more vocal in their opposition to the previous generation's beliefs. In a gradual series of steps church leaders moved black worshipers to separate seating at the back of the church, barred them from sacred rituals such as foot washings and the kiss of peace, and prohibited them from burial in the congregational graveyard. Finally, and surprisingly given the long history of interracial Moravian fellowship, black Brothers and Sisters were excluded from worship with whites altogether and installed in a separate new black Moravian congregation in 1822. The following year, black congregants built themselves a log church beside the new black graveyard at the southern end of Salem. The Moravians were not alone in enacting such racial divisions, since Methodists, Baptists, and other denominations did much the same. Throughout the young nation, prospects for a less hierarchical, racially stratified society faded as slavery and spiritual segregation became more deeply entrenched.[28]

The new all-black congregation, though born of white separatist impulses, was actually welcomed by African American worshipers disgusted with Moravian hypocrisy and condescension. At an early meeting in which Pastor Steiner discussed with them the founding of the new congregation, some congregants admitted they had stayed away from services previously "because they felt ashamed to go into a meeting of the white people." Steiner quoted them as saying, "We black people love each other and are happy to see each other and therefore will gladly come to the meetings which will be held for us." By no means was this to be an independent church under black leadership; services would be led by Steiner, who firmly controlled the congregation's activities and was quick to reprimand behavior he believed disruptive, such as ecstatic bouts of spirit possession by believers "under conviction." Still, despite these restrictions the congregation thrived, apparently because worshipers found it a supportive space for social and spiritual companionship.[29]

Outcast from Christian devotions for years, Anna, still known more widely as Nancy, found her way back to fellowship in this new group. In July 1824 Steiner reported that after one church service "there was a blessed Holy Communion with four communicants at which also old Nancy, who had done without it for many years, was present." Though references to her are scant thereafter, it appears that after years of exile, she at last found real acceptance in this fellowship of genuine spiritual equals as she never had among white Brethren. Upon her death in 1829 the pastor's obituary explained that "for the last several years she was not able to go out much anymore, but a few years ago she was still here for the Holy communion and explained that she had again strengthened herself with the Savior's look of love." Another minister had visited her the day before she died, and "at a moment when she was conscious she wanted the same brother to pray with her and sing, which he did." This deathbed request for music might have expressed whatever reconciliation she had reached with the Moravian religion. Since singing and prayer to help the dying pass into the afterlife were common to both Christianity and many West African religions, Anna/Nancy could have been voicing, in this final act of her life, some fusion of the many influences that had shaped her.[30]

Her burial, too, reflected the complicated jarring of these forces. She was buried in the all-black congregational graveyard beside the church, a far different location than that of her husband, Christian, who in a different era forty years earlier had been buried in a racially integrated cemetery alongside white Brethren. Anna's long life straddled those changes—from Africa to America, from inclusion to exclusion to inclusion again. In microcosm, while her story differed in many respects from that of most African women enslaved in America, she embodied the difficult choices they all faced and the mental acuity with which they responded. In finding spiritual refuge from discrimination among fellow enslaved co-religionists, she, and they, embodied the rise of the black church in America.

The tale has a modern coda. On the eve of the Civil War, in 1861, a new, larger brick church was built for the African American congregation next to the old log church in Salem. The brick building remained a bulwark for the congregation as it passed through war and into freedom, and the "Negro Congregation" gained a formal name in 1913: St. Philips Moravian Church. The graveyard filled up, and in the early twentieth century someone removed the gravestones, leaving no sign the bare grass clearing had once been a sanctified landscape. St. Philips congregation moved to a new location in the 1950s, and the brick building, nearly one hundred years old, fell into disrepair. Then, in the 1990s, as renovations began on the church, excavations in the graveyard led by ar-

chaeologist Leland Ferguson uncovered row after row of graves beneath several inches of soil, revealing the burials of several generations of men, women, and children—a record of African American life literally unearthed.

When the archaeologists pried open the floorboards of St. Philips Church they were amazed to find dozens of gravestones piled in neat stacks below—the very stones that had been removed years before, hidden away and forgotten. Here were inscribed tablets, rescued from oblivion, each with its own story of the life of someone, born or sold into slavery between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Among them was Anna. Her stone, identifying her as Nancy, a native of Africa, was visual evidence, backed up by the archival record, that a person from Senegambia or Kongo or Dahomey had been a part of both white and black Moravian church communities and was buried in the Carolina Piedmont's red clay. The silences of slavery may be articulate, but so are its words. A life documented, preserved on paper and stone, a subject for historical resurrection, reflection and memory—we can say that about so few African women. We are lucky that Anna gave us that chance.[31]

NOTES

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1. "Sie war in Afrika geboren, und jung in dieses Land als Sklavin gebracht worden. Hier wohnte sie an mehreren Orten, bis sie vor mehr also 50 Jahren nach Salem kam, wo sie getauft wurde, und zum Heil. Amhl gelangte." Entry of September 4, 1829, "Diary of the Negro Congregation in and around Salem," Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (hereafter referred to as MA-SP), trans. author. A full translation of this entire diary by Elizabeth Marx is available in the archives.

2. MA-SP, September 4, 1829.

3. Many narratives of African men enslaved in the Anglo-Atlantic are included in Vincent Carretta, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004). Among the few African women's narratives are Belinda, "Petition of an African Slave, to the Legislature of Massachusetts," Boston, 1782, in Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 142; Katharine Faull Eze, "Self-Encounters: Two Eighteenth-Century African Memoirs from Moravian Bethlehem," in David McBride, LeRoy Hopkins, and C. Aisha Blackshire-Belay, eds., *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1998), 29–52; and Jerome S. Handler, "Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados," *Slavery and Abolition* 19 (1998): 129–41. An example of a biographical study of an African woman is Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004). See also Wendy Anne Warren, "'The Cause of Her Grief': The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History* 93 (2007): 1031–49.

4. Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Antebellum South* (New York: Norton, 1982). The term "articulate silences" is adapted from King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

5. These developments are discussed in Katherine Carté Engle, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Aaron Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Elisabeth Sommer, *Serving Two Masters: Moravian Brethren in Germany and North Carolina, 1727–1801* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000); Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Michele Gillespie and Robert Beachy, eds., *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World* (New York: Berghahn, 2007).

6. Jon Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005). On the distinction between societies with slaves and slave societies, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

7. *Aeltesten Conferenz* (Elders' Conference), July 2, 1781 (translations of conference minutes by Frances Cumnock); Bill of Sale, October 23, 1781, Slavery-Negro Box, MA-SP.

8. Two works that imagine the world of the Middle Passage are Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2008). On African women in early America, see Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

9. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231–49.

10. *Lebenslauf* (memoir) of Abraham, MA-SP; *Aeltesten Conferenz*, October 16, 1782.

11. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, November 12 and December 11, 1782.

12. Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Betty Wood, "'For Their Satisfaction or Redress': African Americans and Church Discipline in the Early South," in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 109–23; Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, "Religion, Gender, and Identity: Black Methodist Women in a Slave Society, 1770–1810," in Patricia Morton, ed., *Discovering the Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 202–26.

13. These dimensions of Moravian congregational life are discussed in Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, chap. 4. Quoted sentence is from Adelaide Fries et al., eds., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 13 vols. (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1922–2006), 3:1085.

14. This discussion is adapted from Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, 131–32.

15. *Lebenslauf* of Christian, in Bethabara Diary, September 29, 1789 (trans. author).

16. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, November 19, and December 23, 1783; Salem Diary, December 2, and December 25, 1783, in Fries, *Records of the Moravians*, 4:1844, 1845.

17. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, February 21, June 12, July 10, and August 13, 1784.

18. *Lebenslauf* of Christian.

19. Examples include *Aeltesten Conferenz*, October 30, 1784; February 19, April 16, December 24, 1785; December 20, 1786; January 17, February 17, and March 17, 1787.

20. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, December 22, 1787, January 16, 1788.

21. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, October 17, 1787.

22. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, 135–37.

23. "Diary of the Negro Congregation," September 4, 1829; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 275. On extended kinship patterns, including godparents, in slave communities see Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage, 1976); and Stephen Gudeman and Stuart B. Schwartz, "Cleansing Original Sin: Godparenthood and the Baptism of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Bahia," in Raymond T. Smith, ed., *Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 35–56.

24. Bethabara Diary, September 20, 28, and 29, 1789, in Fries, *Records of the Moravians*, 5:2285–86. A fuller description, in German, of the service and of Christian's life may be found in the manuscript copy of the Bethabara diary for September 29. Christian's gravestone is still legible in the Bethabara graveyard.

25. *Aeltesten Conferenz*, July 20, 1796; *Aeltesten Conferenz*, November 27, and December 4, 1815, in Fries, *Records of the Moravians*, 7:3153. The identity of Anna and Nancy as the same person is confirmed by minister Abraham Steiner's obituary of her in the church diary (see n1). Though this document refers to her as Nancy, it describes details of her life, such as her marriage to Christian, which correspond exactly to Anna's life, as confirmed in other documents. On slaves from other evangelical denominations seeking protection from the church, see Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 180–83.

26. On petit marronnage, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1998), 273–79.

27. Hope Committee Minutes, January 22, 1815; *Landarbeiter Conferenz*, January 20, 1815; *Aeltesten Conferenz*, June 22, 1818, in Fries, *Records of the Moravians*, 7:3375; and *Landarbeiter Conferenz*, July 3, 1818.

28. These developments are surveyed in Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, 178–217.

29. "Diary of the Negro Congregation in and around Salem," March 24, 1822, and ("under conviction") December 1, 1822. On the founding of the church see Jon Sensbach, "Culture and Conflict in the Early Black Church: A Moravian Mission Congregation in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 71 (1994): 401–29.

30. "Diary of the Negro Congregation in and around Salem," July 11, 1824, and September 4, 1829.

31. The excavation is described in Leland Ferguson, *God's Fields: Landscape, Religion and Race in Moravian Wachovia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

Elizabeth Maxwell Steele

"A Great Politician" and the Revolution in the Southern Backcountry

CORY JOE STEWART

In the fall of 1780 in the backcountry town of Salisbury, North Carolina, Elizabeth Maxwell Steele wrote a letter to her brother-in-law in Pennsylvania seeking information about the war that had engulfed the newly formed United States. Through her various contacts, Steele already understood much about the conflict. She knew that France had entered the war and that the French admiral was sailing around the Indies waiting for an opportunity to attack the British. She knew that Savannah had fallen, followed by Charleston and the loss of most of South Carolina. She also knew the British forces led by General Cornwallis were just south of the North Carolina border, waiting to invade, but had been temporarily halted by the decimation of one of their flanks at the Battle of King's Mountain. She did not know, however, what was happening in the northern states, and for that information she turned to her contact in the North, her brother-in-law Ephraim Steele. Elizabeth Steele had two sons serving in the military, but her request for information was not just that of a concerned mother, nor was she a spy. Women in the Revolutionary period played strictly defined roles, and their principal identities stemmed from their duties as wives and mothers. Elizabeth Steele measured herself by the criteria of her time and strongly embraced her roles as mother and grandmother. But she also owned a tavern, and through this role she identified herself as a businesswoman, patriot, and politician. Tavern owners, regardless of their gender, not only delivered important services; they also served as key community leaders. In this role, people relied on Elizabeth Steele for information. Perhaps because she was a woman and because of her personality, she gained a competitive edge over male

tavern owners in gleaning such information. Elizabeth Steele believed that her special access to critical people gave her invaluable insights into the swirl of social and political dynamics around her. She recognized that when she wrote letters sharing and requesting information about current political issues, she was performing the act of "a great politician." Her activities during the war not only created a new role for her as a citizen and "great politician" but also made her a legendary figure of the Revolution in North Carolina.

To understand Elizabeth's world, and the influence she had in it, we must understand the North Carolina backcountry. The region where her family settled was a dynamic place in the second half of the eighteenth century. White migration into the North Carolina backcountry had begun as early as the 1740s when hunters and traders moved into the region west of the Yadkin River. By 1745 the population of the backcountry probably numbered only in the hundreds. Over the decades that followed, however, thousands of settlers from northern colonies and especially Pennsylvania moved down the valley of Virginia to settle the backcountry. As one observer noted in 1755, "men out of the Pennsylvania and Jersey governments" had begun to farm the land in North Carolina "near the mountains." Colonial officials also observed this massive influx of settlers. Colonial governor Gabriel Johnson reported that the immigrants all "go backwards" into the interior in 1750. To accommodate this massive influx, colonial officials formed Rowan County, establishing the town of Salisbury in 1755 as the county seat. By the 1760s North Carolina's population, the fastest growing colony in British America, was estimated at two hundred thousand people.[1]

The result of this massive growth was that the North Carolina backcountry was in its political, social, and economic infancy throughout the Revolutionary era, and through most of Elizabeth Steele's life. As a colony North Carolina developed in two very distinct regions. There was greater connection between the backcountry and northern or southern colonies than there was with the rest of North Carolina since migration to the backcountry was a movement from north to south, not east to west. The economies developed differently as well. The property holdings of the backcountry elite, which Elizabeth was a part of, paled in comparison to those of the elite along the coast and tidewater regions where the political and economic power of the colony was centered. The dynamic economy of the backcountry was based on small-scale farming and trade with other colonies. Large-scale plantation agriculture and large slaveholdings would not emerge in the region until after the Revolution.[2]

Elizabeth Steele was born Elizabeth Maxwell, probably in 1733. Her family had been part of that great wave of migration from Pennsylvania, but whether Steele was born in Pennsylvania, en route to North Carolina, or in the backcountry

A LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEPICTION OF ELIZABETH MAXWELL STEELE

Here, Steele ministers to an exhausted General Nathanael Greene in her tavern in 1781. Engraving by Alonso Chapel, from James Ames Spencer's *History of the United States* (New York: Johnson, Wilson, 1876), 4:120.

remains unknown. In fact, little information remains extant about her family background, although there are indications that they were well-to-do for that time and place. For example, her parents sent her brother James Maxwell to the University of Edinburgh to study medicine. Few backcountry inhabitants could afford such an expensive education for their children.[3]

The Maxwells maintained close ties with family members they left behind in northern colonies and nurtured few connections with the eastern seaboard counties of their new colony. They were not alone. In many respects the North Carolina backcountry developed separately from the eastern part of the colony, for virtually no rivers or roads linked them. Many contemporaries, and later historians too, considered the backcountry isolated because of these limitations. One observer concluded that the people in the backcountry might as well have been "in the middle of the ocean." Yet such accounts were greatly exaggerated.[4]

Still, the backcountry remained insular. When Elizabeth came of age, she married a local businessman, Robert Gillespie, in 1750. Gillespie, descended from a family of early settlers to the backcountry, became a successful entrepreneur in the growing region. The bulk of his business lay in land speculation as he bought and sold lots in the thriving town of Salisbury. He also may have been involved in trade with local Native Americans. The Committee of Public Claims granted him a claim of eight pounds, eight shillings for provisions for the Indians in 1758. Although records do not indicate which tribe or the circumstances for this grant, in all likelihood it was a reimbursement for supplies given to the Catawba Indians in the recent war against the Cherokees. Robert further expanded his business interests by purchasing and then operating a tavern in Salisbury.[5]

Elizabeth was instrumental in the success of this new venture. Although the norms of colonial society regulated women's roles, circumstances could make those standards fluid, as in the business relationship of Robert and Elizabeth. The tavern that Robert owned created a professional opportunity not only for him but for Elizabeth as well. Elizabeth's assistance in operating the tavern was not unusual in the eighteenth century as women often worked alongside their husbands, becoming what Laurel Ulrich refers to as "Deputy Husbands." It is clear Robert wore many hats in business, and his wife's assistance would have been essential. Indeed, Elizabeth and others like her learned to operate businesses without their husbands' presence, and Elizabeth was allegedly adept at this work.[6]

Elizabeth was also a mother. She and Robert had a daughter, Margaret, and a son, Robert, whom Elizabeth affectionately called Robin. The growing family suffered their share of challenges even before the American Revolution. As the

white population in the backcountry grew, so did Native American resistance to settlement. Although the Cherokees lived in towns that dotted the southern tip of the Appalachian Mountains far from the settled backcountry, they claimed hunting territory well into the North Carolina Piedmont. These hunting grounds supplemented Cherokee agriculture. The influx of white settlers scattered the game they depended on and created competition for natural resources. Sporadic violence between white settlers and Cherokees became common throughout the 1750s. In 1759 the Cherokees began a series of campaigns against backcountry settlers, sparking an event historians identify as the Cherokee War.[7]

Elizabeth's family became victims of the violence and turmoil of these Indian/settler contests. While returning to Salisbury from Fort Dobbs, Robert Gillespie Sr. was attacked and "barbarously mangled" by assailants believed to be Cherokee. He lived for twenty-nine days before he succumbed to his injuries.[8] Widowed in her late twenties, Elizabeth Gillespie transitioned into a new legal category: a feme sole. In early America, a married woman could not own or sell real property in her own name. Her civic identity was that of her husband. A widow with no fully grown sons held a unique position in colonial society, able to participate actively in the public world beyond the traditional domain of hearth and home. Despite her personal loss, Elizabeth was prepared to take on her deceased husband's mantle.[9]

The demographic and economic growth of the region generated new opportunities for many, men and women alike. Salisbury, as the county seat, geographically situated at a crossroads that connected trade from northern colonies such as Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey to South Carolina, particularly Charleston, was an especially advantageous location. Historian Jack P. Greene has, in fact, referred to Salisbury as the most important inland town in colonial and revolutionary North Carolina.[10]

Newly widowed Elizabeth Gillespie began investing her inheritance in real estate around Salisbury. She purchased a town lot in 1760 that included a home from which she would operate a tavern. The following year she purchased another town lot, along with a 275-acre tract that bordered the town's northern boundary. Each of these properties represented significant locations for future business opportunities. By the time she was thirty years old, Gillespie was one of the wealthiest and most prominent citizens in Salisbury.[11]

As Salisbury grew, it switched from a backcountry trading town to a consumer society where stores offered fashionable apparel and accessories. This transformation allowed women, as key consumers, to become more a part of public life. Salisbury merchant William Steele sold textiles, clothing, fashion

accessories, and other luxury items at his store. His account book reveals over thirty women customers with accounts there. Elizabeth Gillespie was one of them. Steele and Gillespie were neighbors and, between their physical proximity and business transactions, soon developed a close relationship. Historian Johanna Miller Lewis noted, in fact, that Gillespie's name appeared in Steele's account book by her first name alone, moreover with no cash or price listed for the items.[12] Perhaps not surprisingly, given these clues to their developing courtship, the two wed in 1763. Elizabeth and William's marriage created a professional partnership. Although Elizabeth had been the tavern keeper and William the merchant, he obtained an ordinary license in 1764 to operate a tavern soon known as Steele's Tavern.[13]

Previous historians have noted that Elizabeth continued to control her own finances after marrying William, thereby maintaining her economic freedom. Johanna Miller Lewis points out that Elizabeth even retained the name Gillespie after her second marriage, suggesting her insistence on sustaining her autonomy and her business connections from her first marriage. Elizabeth's name appeared frequently in the public records of Salisbury, far more often than that of any other woman.[14]

In 1764 Elizabeth and William had a son named John. Ultimately, their marital and business partnership proved successful but short lived, for William died in 1773. Elizabeth and her three children were left financially secure. They had a house, numerous lots in Salisbury, slaves, and hundreds of acres of land outside of town. A third of this estate was left to Elizabeth, while son John Steele was to inherit the property when Elizabeth died. John was also bequeathed a slave woman named Bridgett and her four children, sixteen of the couple's lots in Salisbury, and 245 of their out-of-town acres. William left his stepchildren, Robert and Margaret, 250 pounds each.[15]

Although a widow once again, Elizabeth remained a successful entrepreneur. In 1774 she applied for and was granted an ordinary license to own and operate a tavern, the first woman before the American Revolution to be granted such a license in Rowan County. Although she was unique as a woman tavern owner in the backcountry, such ownership was not uncommon in colonial America. Because many taverns were operated near homes or were attached to them, and because this business involved entertaining guests and serving food and drink, women tavern owners like Elizabeth were not disrupting gender norms of their time. Moreover, taverns were highly regulated businesses with rates set by the county court. This meant tavern owners, whether men or women, had to deal directly with local governments. Tavern licenses had to be renewed annually, and tavern keepers had to demonstrate they were of good character, able to

provide suitable accommodations, and follow local laws and regulations. Elizabeth's license signaled she had earned the respect of her community and the endorsement of Salisbury's government.[16]

Elizabeth Steele's tavern not only represented her independence and business acumen, it also contributed to the growing economy in the North Carolina backcountry during the Revolutionary era. Her operation was large enough to necessitate hiring a blacksmith and a carpenter and using at least five slaves. Elizabeth maintained long-term accounts with a circle of artisans and laborers, free and slave. Blacksmith Absolom Taylor worked for the family for over five years. Carpenter Joseph Atkins worked for six years, doing such things as making custom furniture, providing additions to the home, and crafting William Steele's coffin. Elizabeth was a shrewd employer, securing the loyalty of her employees by paying in cash in a region where hard currency was scarce.[17]

Taverns in the backcountry served numerous functions. In a place where traditional community social structures were weak or underdeveloped, taverns provided many more services than simply serving refreshments and providing entertainment. They served as post offices, public meeting places, and even legal courts. As historian Daniel Thorp has noted, taverns offered invaluable "windows into the culture" of the North Carolina backcountry. As a tavern owner Elizabeth Steele stood at the center of her community as a successful businesswoman and proprietor of an important public meeting place. Travelers of the time observed that Elizabeth Steele "kept the best tavern" and made it their place of choice.[18]

Elizabeth continued to pursue speculative interests, investing in land beyond Salisbury. In 1778 she acquired two hundred acres that stretched into the county in anticipation of the town's future expansion. While most women's names in these land records were listed alongside their husband's name, Elizabeth was one of the few women purchasing land in her own name.[19] She also owned at least five slaves, a large number for the North Carolina backcountry. Taverns like Elizabeth's were large operations and needed the help of several employees. She may have employed her slaves in the stables or as artisans. Elizabeth's inventory of her estate included four wool and linen spinning wheels, cards for combing out wool, a flax hackle, and five pairs of sheep shears.[20] She probably employed her female slaves at this work in order to provide linens and towels for her tavern guests. Perhaps she supplemented tavern profits with the sale of spare cloth. In fact, in 1781 she took in an orphan named Alden Campbell as a weaving apprentice. She provided him room and board and taught him a valuable skill in exchange for his work, which he was expected to perform until he reached twenty-one.[21]

Elizabeth Steele was one of the wealthiest citizens in Salisbury and one of the best connected. Her accounts show that she did business with many prominent leaders in the North Carolina backcountry, including Martin Armstrong, the leader of the Surry County Patriots, and William R. Davie, a patriot leader in the Piedmont. These connections helped nurture her developing role in Revolutionary politics.[22]

Elizabeth was an avid letter writer, giving us the best window through which to view her world. The bulk of her letters that have survived she wrote to William Steele's brother, Ephraim, in Carlyle, Pennsylvania. She avoided business (Ephraim was also a successful merchant) but inquired about "the happiness of friends." She wrote affectionately about friends and family, showing a candid spirit and sharp wit that probably reflected her public personality too. In one letter she chided Ephraim for working on Sunday, threatening to show the proof of his work to the local minister. But she then stated she would not since he had sent her tea. She also discussed her fondness for whiskey and promised to save a few gallons to share together if he came to visit. Letters that connected her family in Pennsylvania to her family in North Carolina were not only about personal relationships but became avenues of information about the war that increasingly engulfed her world.[23]

The plentiful scholarship on women during the Revolution agrees on one thing. The Revolutionary War brought women into the public sphere. Women of Rowan County were no exception, and while Elizabeth participated more fully in the public sphere than most, the events of the Revolution pushed her into the center of that conflict. Initially, her immediate interest in the war was not that of a "great politician" but that of a concerned mother. In the spring of 1778 Elizabeth wrote to Ephraim about her distress over her youngest son, John, who had joined the military. She hoped he would "quit the army, and betake himself of some business for life." Ephraim had visited John's camp, as a concerned uncle or as Elizabeth's spy to check on him and report back to his mother. Elizabeth worried all the more because John neglected to write to her, despite her chiding. In the fall of 1778 her older son, Robert, joined the army too, a decision she lamented that gave her "no small uneasiness."[24]

Elizabeth was torn. Her patriotism, as an avowed sympathizer, conflicted with her concerns as a mother. She wanted her sons to be safe, but at the same time, she wanted them to perform their duty as patriots and to act with honor. After scolding John for not writing, she pled with him to quit the army. She warned that if he quit, however, it must be done in a way that conveyed "honor and faithfulness to your country and to yourself." Elizabeth's disapproval of Robert's soldiering reflected not so much her lack of commitment to "the cause

of liberty" but that she considered him as "too young to launch out into the world."[25]

Elizabeth's interest in the war was not limited to her concerns as a mother. Like women from all walks of life, Elizabeth was drawn into the realm of politics and political interests because of the impact of the American Revolution. She used her social status, contacts, and position as a tavern owner to place herself at the center of the Revolutionary War in the South. Her surviving letters trace not only backcountry revolutionary events but also her own concerns as the British pushed into North Carolina in an effort to end the war.[26]

Keeping a tavern at a busy crossroads ensured Elizabeth had access to extensive information. It was at her tavern that local residents and travelers gathered and exchanged news regarding the Revolution. Elizabeth listened to that information, noting in her letters that her knowledge of wartime activities was based on "verbal accounts." She sought information from her contacts in the North, especially Ephraim, from whom she consistently requested "a paper or two from the north." It was in one such letter in 1780 that she asked Ephraim not only to "please send us Northern intelligence" but reminded him, "You know I am a great politician."[27]

Elizabeth recognized that many people relied on her for wartime information. In the spring of 1778 she wrote Ephraim, thanking him for sending a copy of Thomas Paine's *Crisis No. 5*. The pamphlet "gave [me] great pleasure by serving to brace our minds, long relaxed by the inaction of the armies through the winter season. We hope, however, the spring and summer will produce some important event and pray you to pass no opportunity of giving us the news." She often wrote in the plural, as she did in this passage, presumably referencing not just her family but the patriotic community around her.[28]

Tired of wartime inactivity during the winter of 1778, Elizabeth was excited by France's entry into the war. Many patriots, including Elizabeth, were anxious to see the results of this new alliance, particularly if northern cities besieged by the British could be taken back. "Please do give us the fate of New York. We hear it is to be attacked by the French fleet and American army, and we should be glad to have a more distinct account of the affair of the 28,th," she wrote Ephraim.[29]

In the midst of wartime chaos in the region, Elizabeth's family grew. In July 1778, she wrote Ephriam, she was to take on "the very respectable, and important character of GRAND-MOTHER." Granddaughter Nancy was born in August 1778, and Elizabeth was elated. A year later she exclaimed that Nancy was running, dancing, singing, and speaking in a language that Elizabeth speculated could have been "Hebrew, for all I know."[30]

Like many citizens, the new grandmother hoped the war would end, or at least become entangled in diplomacy between the French and British. She lamented that the British government would not acknowledge American independence until "their political frenzy" with France ended. The hope that Elizabeth had for the French fleet quickly turned to frustration: "We hear the French Fleet are only gone out to cruise." Elizabeth's information was accurate. The French fleet was sailing in the West Indies after failing to seize the port in New York.[31]

With the French fleet in the West Indies the door was opened for the British to sail south. With the war stalemated in the North, the new British plan was to attack the southern colonies and move north to close the gap. In December 1778 the British took Savannah, Georgia, and occupied that city. Not until the next fall did patriot forces, with the help of the French fleet, drive the British back by laying siege to the city. Within days Elizabeth knew from "verbal accounts" that the attack had begun, despite the three hundred miles separating Savannah and Salisbury, underlying the fact that the backcountry was better connected than most people realized.[32]

After gaining a strong foothold in Savannah, the British pressed on to Charleston in hopes of securing the larger, more strategic port city. The attack began on April 13, 1780. Only sixteen days later, Elizabeth reported the unfolding events to Ephraim: "I am sorry that I can't (knowing you to be a good Whig) make you happy with some news from Charleston." Several small skirmishes around Charleston had met "with various success," she noted. The full attack was still to come, but Charleston was surrounded and the British fleet set to bombard the city. "We everyday expect to hear of a general storm on, or the continued blockade of Charleston, 6 or 7 thousand we conjecture on each side." The "general storm" Elizabeth and so many others feared began on May 9. Three days later the largest port in the South had surrendered to the British, devastating the American war effort.[33]

Long before British troops arrived near her home, Elizabeth had already lived through a tumultuous time. Local patriots were fighting those whom Elizabeth dubbed "Tory insurrections." The conflict was particularly chaotic because no strong united front existed for either side. Those with no strong affiliation had to choose a side or risk persecution from the patriots or the Tories. Many observers concluded that the people of the North Carolina backcountry were "not united in mind."[34]

By the summer of 1780 anxiety in the region was high and evident in the only surviving letter from Elizabeth that summer. As British troops neared the North Carolina border and began to organize an invasion of the state, local Tories became more active. Elizabeth began her letter by informing Ephraim

that "my little family are well, but suffering with others the calamity of the times." She explained that the region was surrounded by "Tory Insurrections" and relayed details of a battle near the forks of the Catawba River, later called the Battle of Ramseur's Mill. She knew British troops were not yet in North Carolina but that South Carolina and Georgia were "in the Enemies' hands." Elizabeth hoped that with the advancement of the Continental Army toward the North and South Carolina border the British would be pushed back and "cooped up" in Charleston. She concluded with a request for all important information: "Pray give us news with a paper or two from the North."[35]

After the victories in South Carolina, General Cornwallis decided to try to conquer the entire South by invading North Carolina. The British theorized that their forces could better control South Carolina if patriots in North Carolina could not support patriots in South Carolina with military assistance. Cornwallis positioned himself south of Charlotte. He established a western flank made up of the forces under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson, and they moved through the South Carolina backcountry with plans to meet and reinforce Cornwallis at Charlotte.[36]

The reinforcements that Cornwallis counted on never made it that far. "With the utmost satisfaction," Elizabeth wrote to Ephraim, "I can acquaint you with the sudden and favorable turn of our public affairs." The reinforcements had been "cut off," and Cornwallis was forced to retreat back to South Carolina. Elizabeth speculated that Cornwallis was on his way to Charleston, but such a drastic retreat was not necessary. Cornwallis's invasion would come, but it would have to wait. As she so often did, Elizabeth ended her letter with a request for information by exclaiming that she needed the "intelligence." It was in this letter that she called herself "a great politician."[37]

Modern readers can certainly assume Elizabeth was being a bit sarcastic in this self-reference. She had not, nor did she intend on running for political office. Nor could she as a woman. But she did see herself as a representative of her family's and community's interests. As the backcountry fell into civil war, information became an important tool for self-preservation. Moravian merchant Turgotte Bagge of Salem wrote that gossip circulated throughout the region during the war, and he noted that everyone in the region had "become a newsmonger." Rumors created fear and anxiety. Backcountry inhabitants were hungry for solid information. Elizabeth Steele's contacts and "a paper or two from the north" made her a reliable source of information. In gathering and sharing this information regarding the war, Elizabeth Steele was placing herself at the center of this hub of political discourse in the North Carolina backcountry. The

identification of herself as "a great politician" was not so grandiose in this light, for she and her tavern were providing a critical nexus for news.[38]

During the fall and winter of 1781, British forces slowly made headway into North Carolina, and the Continental Army, commanded by Nathanael Greene, began to move through the region to prepare defenses. During this period, an event allegedly occurred that would become a part of North Carolina Revolutionary lore. This story—and there are many versions, though they vary slightly—constitutes the bulk of what has hitherto been published about Elizabeth. In February 1781 General Greene rode into Salisbury alone, entering Steele's tavern and joining a surgeon from Daniel Morgan's army who was busy writing out paroles for the many sick and wounded soldiers. Greene appeared disheveled, and Dr. Reed inquired about the general's condition. Greene replied, "Yes, fatigued, hungry, alone and penniless." Elizabeth overheard Greene's remarks, entered the room, handed him two bags of money, and stated: "Take these General, you need them, and I can do without them." General Greene left the tavern newly refinanced and encouraged. Before departing, he removed a portrait of King George III from the wall and wrote on the back of it, "Oh George, hide thy face and mourn."[39]

Little can be found to validate whether or not the event happened. None of Elizabeth's surviving letters mention it, nor do the writings of Nathanael Greene. But two interesting pieces of evidence lend some factual light to the story. General Greene was in fact in the vicinity of Salisbury when the event supposedly occurred and was in a rather desperate situation with his army short on supplies and full of sick soldiers. The John Steele Papers of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina contain a document addressed to the people of the Salisbury District from him. The notice thanks the people in the district who have on "all occasions, given such support to the southern war," a moment when his army was "in want of almost everything." The document is not dated, but on the back a handwritten note states it was given to Elizabeth Steele in 1781. Whether this document was given to Steele to display in her tavern or it was a broadside displayed in numerous places, including the tavern, cannot be determined.[40]

The other surviving piece of evidence is the portrait of the king that General Greene allegedly removed from Elizabeth's tavern wall. Portraits of the king and queen do exist and are housed in a special museum dedicated to preserving congregational and local history at Thyatira Presbyterian Church in Salisbury. The portrait is a print, its colors still vibrant. On the back of the portrait, in faint chalk are the words: "O George, Hide thy face and mourn."[41]

We know for certain that the winter and spring of 1781 was a dark time for Elizabeth and her family. In April she wrote to Ephraim that her family had suffered from smallpox. The virus had killed her youngest granddaughter, but the rest of her family had recovered. While her family was battling the disease, she wrote sarcastically, "the British were so kind as to pay us a visit." The British took all of her horses, dry cattle, horse feed, liquor, and "family provisions." One of her slaves ran away with the British. Elizabeth felt fortunate that she still had her house, furniture, and milk cow. She noted that others in the region had not been so lucky.[42]

The news was not all bad. Elizabeth reported that General Cornwallis was on his way to the North Carolina coast after March 15. What sent him moving that direction was the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Elizabeth was comforted by her sense that the war was ending, and history would prove her right. Cornwallis's retreat took him to Yorktown and his eventual surrender.[43]

We know little about Elizabeth Steele after the war. In her last surviving letter she informed Ephraim of her son Robert's death. John, her surviving son, lived with her and may have assumed operation of the tavern after the war, helping to explain the scarcity of documents regarding Elizabeth. Historians have noted that a cultural shift after the American Revolution stressing gentility encouraged women to return to the domestic sphere, particularly if they were married or, in the case of Elizabeth, had an adult son. Elizabeth does, however, continue to appear in public records as the head of a household. As late as 1788 she was still investing in land, when she jumped at the opportunity to purchase newly available property seized by the state during the Revolution.[44]

In the last years of her life Elizabeth watched John Steele grow in prominence in the region. John married in 1783 and ran a mercantile business in Salisbury, probably left to him by his father. He may also have taken on responsibilities associated with the tavern. John entered public service when he was sworn in as Justice of the County Court of Rowan in 1787. He was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons to represent the Borough of Salisbury and later represented Salisbury at the Ratification Convention for the Federal Constitution. Once the federal government was formed, John was elected as a representative to Congress. His greatest political achievement came in 1796 when George Washington appointed him the Comptroller of the Treasury.[45]

Elizabeth Steele was determined that her children succeed in life and conduct themselves honorably in service to their country. She was no doubt especially proud of John's accomplishments although she did not live to see him serve as U.S. Comptroller. Elizabeth Steele died on November 22, 1790. She was in her late fifties, having outlived a son, two husbands, and a grandchild. She was bur-

ied alongside all of them at Cathey's Meeting House, now Thyatira Presbyterian Church, where King George's portrait remains housed.[46]

Her obituary in the *North Carolina Gazette* and *Fayetteville Chronicle* celebrated her life as a mother, grandmother, and patriot. The newspaper also published her final letter to her children, in which she encouraged them to love one another, be frugal, and remember the less fortunate. She also took one last opportunity to stress the importance of good conduct and public virtue. "Bad company," she wrote, "has ruined many young people."[47]

Elizabeth Steele cared for her family, community, and country. She faced challenges that many women of the eighteenth century faced and some challenges that most women did not. She seized opportunities generated by her marriages and the dynamic nature of her region. She served her community by gathering and sharing important information about the American Revolution. Although she left behind limited records with which to re-create her experience and attitudes, she has not disappeared into obscurity. Her legendary assistance to General Greene, whether true or not, stands as a testament to the importance she had on those around her. Her commitment to Nathanael Greene has been immortalized in poetry, on canvas, in stone, and in bronze, and it remains part of North Carolina's lore more than two hundred years after her death, suggesting that Elizabeth Steele pursued the work of a "Great Politician."[48]

NOTES

1. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1963), 121; A. Roger Ekirch, *"Poor Carolina" Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729–1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 9, 129; A. Roger Ekirch, "A New Government of Liberty": Herman Husband's Vision of Backcountry North Carolina, 1755," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1977): 644; Robert L. Ganyard, *The Emergence of North Carolina's Revolutionary State Government* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1978), 1; Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 54, 66–67; William Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 572; Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747–1762* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 23; William Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (hereafter cited as *Colonial Records*), 7:248; David LeRoy Corbitt, *The Formation of North Carolina Counties 1663–1943* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), 185, 199; Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 146.

2. For more information on the development of the backcountry and its comparison to the rest of the colony, see Johanna Miller Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); and Bradford J. Wood, "Politics and Authority in Colonial North Carolina: A Regional Perspective," *North Carolina Historical Review* 81, no. 1 (2004): 1–37.

3. Archibald Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele: Patriot," *North Carolina Booklet* 12 (1912): 72–73; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 107–8. Early historians, including Archibald Henderson and Jethro Rumple, state that Elizabeth Maxwell was born in 1733 but provide no evidence for that specific date. Rumple goes on to argue that Elizabeth Maxwell was a native to the North Carolina backcountry. In my research no specific evidence to prove that has been found; however, I do not feel that she was born in the region but migrated in with her family.

4. E. Roger Ekirch, *"Poor Carolina": Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729–1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 180; Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 74–75; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 108; Lawrence F. London, "The Representation Controversy in Colonial North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 11, no. 4 (1934): 255. For information on the political control that Virginia was able to maintain in their backcountry, see L. Scott Philyaw, *Virginia's Western Visions: Political Culture Expansion on an Early American Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004); Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 140; "William Tryon to the Earl of Shelburne, March 7th, 1768," in William S. Powell, *Correspondence of William Tryon and Other Selected Papers*, vol. 2: 1768–1818 (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981), 42.

5. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 41, 162, 168–69; "Reports of the committee of public claims held at Edenton, Monday the 27th day of November 1758," in *Colonial Records*, 5:975. For more information on interaction between white settlers and the Catawbas, see James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (New York: Norton, 1989).

6. Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, 6; Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 75; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1850* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 37.

7. Margaret Gillespie married a prominent Rowan County minister, Samuel McCorkle, in 1776. Robert served in the American Revolution, later marrying and moving to Georgetown, South Carolina, where he died in 1786. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, March 17, 1786, NCDAH; Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 75, 101–2; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1759–1769* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 457–58; John R. Mass, "'All This Poor Province Could Do': North Carolina and the Seven Years War, 1757–1762," *North Carolina Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (2002): 53–54; John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756–63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 1, 9, 41; Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 193.

8. *North Carolina Chronicle or Fayetteville Gazette*, Monday, January 3, 1791; James Brawley, *The Rowan Story 1753–1953: A Narrative History of Rowan County, North Carolina* (Salisbury: Rowan Printing Company, 1953), 27; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 107; Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 168.

9. A great body of work has been devoted to the status of women and widows in colonial America. In colonial America there existed two common laws that related to a woman's civil identity, referred to as feme covert and feme sole. Feme covert stated that a married woman could not own real property, while under feme sole a widowed woman could control real property so long as she did not remarry. Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, 5; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 108; Marylyn Salmon, "Women and Property in South Carolina: The Evidence from Marriage Settlements, 1730–1830," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1982): 655; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 125; Lisa Wilson Waciega, "'A Man of Business': The Widow

of Means in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1750–1850," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (1987): 40–64; Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 22.

10. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 146; Daniel B. Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 48 (July 1991): 387, 389; Alan D. Watson, "Women in Colonial North Carolina: Overlooked and Underestimated," *North Carolina Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (1981): 1–22.

11. Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 38; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 108; Mary Beth Norton, "'What an Alarming Crisis Is This': The Southern Women in the American Revolution," in Jeffrey Crow and Larry Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 206; Ramsey, *The Carolina Cradle*, 168.

12. Of the women in William Steele's account book, all were referred to by a full name or by "widow" or "Mrs" except Elizabeth. See Rowan County Deeds, VI, 160, Rowan County Courthouse Deeds and Manuscripts Office; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 72, 104, 108; Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 169; Julia Cherry Spruill, *Women's Life and Work: In the Southern Colonies* (New York: Norton, 1972), 75, 113.

13. Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 75–76; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 72, 109; Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 169; Daniel B. Thorp, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier: Rowan County, North Carolina, 1753–1776," *Journal of Southern History* 62 (November 1996): 668. On August 7, 1771, William Steele was sworn in during a session of the North Carolina Assembly at New Bern as a commissioner of the Borough of Salisbury; see Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 77.

14. Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700–1835* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 9; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 37, 109; Johanna Miller Lewis, "Women and Economic Freedom in the North Carolina Backcountry," in Larry D. Eldridge, ed., *Women and Freedom in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 198–201.

15. John Steele was born November 16, 1764; Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 77; "Anonymous Notes," William Steele Folder, Rowan County Public Library; William Steele Will, Rowan County Will Book A, Clerk of Court Estates Division Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, North Carolina, 168–69.

16. A great deal of work had been done on the importance of taverns and tavern culture in early America. James S. Brawley, *The Rowan Story 1753–1953: A Narrative History of Rowan County, North Carolina* (Salisbury, N.C.: Rowan Printing Company, 1953), 56; Susan Clair Imbarrato, "Ordinary Travel: Tavern Life and Female Accommodation in Early America and the New Republic," *Women's Studies* 28 (1998): 29–51, 29; Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 19–20; Thorp, "Taverns and Tavern Culture," 680; Jo White Linn, ed., *Abstracts of the Minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, Rowan County, N.C. 1763–1774* (Salisbury, N.C.: privately published), 2:158; Spruill, *Women's Life and Work*, 293; Alan D. Watson, *Society in Early North Carolina: A Documentary History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 2000), 93–94.

17. Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 65–66.

18. James Clitherall Diary, 1776, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC Chapel Hill (this document is a typed transcript, and the location of the original is unknown to the archives); Thorp, "Taverns and Tavern Culture," 662; Daniel B. Thorp, "Taverns and Communities: The Case of Rowan County, North Carolina," in David Colin Crass et al., eds., *The Southern Colonial Backcountry: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Frontier Communities* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee

Press, 1998), 76; Alan D. Watson, *Society in Colonial North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996), 16.

19. A. B. Pruitt, *Abstracts of Land Entries Rowan County, North Carolina 1778* (privately published, 1987), 21, 98.

20. This is not true of all backcountry counties. Some counties such as Granville had a considerable number of slaves. Lewis, "Women and Economic Freedom in the North Carolina Backcountry," 191; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 94, 107–8; Michael Marvin Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, *Slavery in North Carolina 1748–1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 19; Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, April 19, 1781, John Steele Papers, NCDAH. In the 1782–83 Rowan County Tax List, Elizabeth Steele was recorded as owning horses, mules, and cattle; see Jo White Linn, ed., *Rowan County North Carolina Tax List, 1757–1800: Annotated Transcriptions* (Salisbury, N.C.: privately published, 1995), 201.

21. Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-America Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 230–31; Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 108–9.

22. John Steele Papers, box 6, folder 96, North Carolina State Archives; John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 186; for more on Martin Armstrong see Cory Joe Stewart, "The Affairs of Boston in the North Carolina Backcountry during the American Revolution" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina–Greensboro, 2010).

23. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, April 29, 1780, NCDAH; Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 93. Elizabeth Steel to Ephraim Steel, January 22, 1778, Ephraim Steele Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC Chapel Hill. This letter has never been published as the others have, probably because it references Elizabeth's fondness for alcohol. Carol Berkin has suggested in her work that women often published political comments anonymously so as to continue to have the appearance of gentility but still express themselves. With this in mind it is impossible to determine how Elizabeth presented herself publicly, but she writes very openly with Ephraim in their letters (*Revolutionary Mothers*, 16).

24. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, May 15, 1778; Elizabeth Steele to "My Son," July 7, 1778; Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 17, 1778, all John Steele Papers, NCDAH. See also Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 94–97.

25. Elizabeth Steele to "My Son," July 7, 1778, and Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 17, 1778, both John Steele Papers, NCDAH. For more information about the impact of the Revolutionary Era and the idea of "republican motherhood" see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

26. Women's patriotism and political interest have been topics of recent scholarly focus. These works have overturned the idea that a woman's patriotism was somehow inferior to that of a man's and was largely connected to her husband's interests or, in the case of Elizabeth Steele, concern for her sons. For more on this see Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 35; Kierner, *Beyond the Household* and *Southern Women in Revolution*; Norton, "'What an Alarming Crisis Is This,'" 204; Hara M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society* (London: UCL Press, 1999), ix, 163.

27. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 19, 1779; Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, July 13, 1780; and Elizabeth Steel to Ephraim Steele, October 25, 1780, all John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

28. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, May 15, 1778, John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

29. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, July 30, 1778, John Steele Papers, NCDAH; John Buchanan,

The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolina (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 286.

30. Elizabeth Steel to Ephraim Steel, July 30, 1778, August 15, 1778, and October 19, 1779, all John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

31. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, July 30, 1778, and Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 25, 1779, both John Steele Papers, NCDAH; John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution 1763–1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 232; Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774–1781* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 123.

32. Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 233, 236–39; Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 19, 1779, John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

33. Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 239, 241, 266; Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, April 29, 1780, John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

34. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, July 13, 1780, John Steele Papers, NCDAH; Bethabara Diary, October 15, 1776, in Adelaide Fries et al., eds., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 13 vols. (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1922–2006), 3:1101. For more on the social turmoil in the region see Paul D. Escott and Jeffrey Crow, "The Social Order and Violent Disorder: An Analysis of North Carolina in the Revolution and the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* 52, no. 3 (1986): 373–402.

35. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, July 13, 1780, John Steele Papers, NCDAH; Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985), 99, 107–8, 128.

36. Alden, *The South in Revolution*, 249.

37. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, October 25, 1780, John Steele Papers, NCDAH.

38. Ibid.; "The Bagge Manuscript 1776," in Fries, *Records of the Moravians*, 3:1031, 1102; Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

39. The legend as it is presented here is from Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 78–83; the earliest version of the story that can be traced goes back to the 1850s, when Charles J. Peterson wrote of a heroic "landlady," although he never specifically identified Steele, in his work *Military Heroes of the Revolution with a Narrative of the War of Independence* (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Smith and Co., 1856), 430–31.

40. The published versions of Greene's letters were used to trace the movements of Nathanael Greene around Salisbury. See Richard Showman, ed., *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vols. 6 and 7 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); An Address by the Honorable Major General Nathanael Greene, To the People of the Salisbury District, n.d., folder 1, John Steele Papers #327, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC Chapel Hill).

41. Seen at Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, North Carolina, March 2002.

42. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, April 19, 1781, John Steele Papers, NCDAH; Last Will and Testament to Elizabeth Steele, Rowan County Will Book B, Rowan County Court House Salisbury, North Carolina, 188–89.

43. Elizabeth Steele to Ephraim Steele, April 19, 1781, John Steele Papers, NCDAH; Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 388–89.

44. Jo White Linn, *Abstracts of the Deeds of Rowan County, N.C., 1753–1785* (Salisbury, N.C.: privately published, 1983), 180. For more on the cultural shift affecting women, see Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 102–39.

45. H. M. Wagstaff, ed., *The Papers of John Steele* (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1924), xxv–xxviii.

46. Elizabeth Steele Will, Rowan County Courthouse.

47. Elizabeth Steele Obituary, and Letter to Her Children printed in *North Carolina Chronicle or Fayetteville Gazette*, Monday January 3, 1791.

48. Henderson, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele," 92–93. The first published version of the legend appeared in W. Gilmore Simms, *The Life of General Greene* (New York: George R. Cooledge and Brother, 1849), 139. Steele was never mentioned by name in Simms's work; she was only referred to as "the landlady." The story, along with Steele's name, later appeared in Peterson, *Military Heroes of the Revolution*, 430–31; James Ames Spencer, *History of the United States of America* (New York: Johnson, Wilson, 1876), 120. The Salisbury Chapter of the DAR erected a monument to Steele in 1911. The bronze tablet was mounted to a granite column at the location of the original tavern. The tablet is now on the wall of the Old Courthouse in Salisbury, which has been converted to a museum.

Rose O'Neal Greenhow

"Bearer of Dispatches to the Confederate Government"

SHEILA R. PHIPPS

At daylight on October 1, 1864, a Confederate soldier overseeing salvaging operations found a woman's lifeless body washed ashore near Wilmington, North Carolina. The body was that of Rose O'Neal Greenhow, Confederate spy, who had almost reached shore on her return from England when tragedy struck. The Wilmington Soldiers' Aid Society took charge of the arrangements for her funeral, planning for her body to lie in state at a hospital chapel and for her burial with military honors, according her all the respect reserved for a soldier. Greenhow had not dressed as a man to serve in the army, nor had she ever lived in Wilmington, but the city received her body as it would a war hero for her service to the South during the war. During the American Civil War, Greenhow became the "Bearer of Dispatches," as her Wilmington grave marker reads, sending information to Confederate generals and being imprisoned for her efforts. The women of Wilmington mourned her death but celebrated the life she had lived as an example for women who supported the southern cause.[1]

Southern women throughout the war had served as surrogates for the families of fallen soldiers, performing the last rites as illustrated in a popular painting by William E. Washington, *The Burial of Latané*. Captain William D. Latané of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry died near Richmond in 1862. His body was taken to the nearby plantation of William Spencer Brockenbrough, where Mrs. Brockenbrough and her friends prepared his body for interment and, with the help of slaves and a visiting minister, gave him a proper burial. Though this is the most famous incident of strangers standing in for a family's deepest mourning rituals, the scene was replayed throughout the war-torn South. The effect, as

ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW AND HER DAUGHTER

Courtesy of the Library of Virginia.

Caroline E. Janney argues, was that women who had never met became connected through letters describing the last moments of soldiers' lives, assurances about their spiritual condition, and their burials. Women who fed, clothed, and nursed soldiers also buried them. At the end of the war, assuming responsibility for maintaining the memory of the South's traditions and wartime heroism in "Lost Cause" organizations, the same women also formed memorial associations, funding monuments honoring the war dead. Such were the foundations upon which Wilmington's women adopted Rose O'Neal Greenhow as one of their own, someone they deemed a fallen hero without family to see to her final needs.[2]

Rose O'Neal Greenhow was born in 1817 in Rockville, Maryland. Though her family was not wealthy, they were well connected, related to the Lees and Randolphs of Virginia and the Calverts of Maryland. They also owned slaves, one of whom murdered Rose's father when she was very young. After her father's death, she and her sister Ellen Elizabeth were sent to Washington, D.C., to live with an aunt who ran a prominent boardinghouse near the Capitol.[3]

From all accounts the girls' aunt made sure they received a good education and were schooled in the social graces.[4] Clearly, Rose's aunt must have had difficulty at times reining in her niece's spirit, since her nickname from childhood was Wild Rose. Described as having a "commanding personality," "tempestuous" eyes, and an "aptitude for intrigue," her nickname remained appropriate throughout her life.[5] She also grew into a beautiful woman, tall and agile with a graceful and dignified carriage. Most accounts describe her as having an olive complexion, with dark eyes and hair and "finely chiseled features."[6]

In 1835 Rose's sister Ellen married James Madison Cutts, nephew of Dolley Madison.[7] Soon after, Rose married Robert Greenhow Jr., from Richmond, Virginia, seventeen years her senior. Robert had made a name for himself in both medicine and government. After graduating from the College of William and Mary and Columbia University, he spent seven years in Europe studying medicine. In 1825 he returned to the United States and began practicing medicine in New York City. At the same time Robert became involved in Thomas Jefferson's project to establish a medical school at the new University of Virginia, gathering information from Europe on the materials needed for the school, finding models of organs, skeletons, and "a series of figures . . . representing the foetus during various periods of utero gestation, [and] . . . a decomposable brain."[8]

In 1830 Greenhow's interest in the liberal revolution in France prompted him to found a newspaper, *The Tricolor*, to inform the public about changes in the French government. Greenhow applauded the revolution in France, claiming that the "great nation" once again stood "forth as the advocate of resistance

and oppression." Greenhow praised France for joining "the march of liberal institutions." Clearly, Rose's husband condoned rebellion when necessary, as would she.[9]

Through his friendship with Robert Livingston, Andrew Jackson's secretary of state, Greenhow's career shifted. Livingston obtained an appointment for Greenhow to the State Department. Fluent in French, Spanish, Italian, and German, Greenhow served as interpreter and, in 1837, became a bearer of dispatches himself. He delivered a formal note from President Martin Van Buren to Mexico's foreign affairs minister detailing grievances against the new government by U.S. citizens living in Mexico. At the same time, Secretary of War Joel Poinsett had Greenhow deliver a personal letter to Mexican president Anastasio Bustamante. Instability following Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821 had made Americans' property there vulnerable to bands of robbers. That, coupled with Mexican resentment over its loss of Texas in 1836, had exacerbated tensions between the United States and Mexico.[10]

By the time of Robert's trip to Mexico, Rose and Robert were living on K Street between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets in Washington. Their family included the first of four daughters—Florence—and at least three slaves: Charles, Mary, and "Aunt Patty."[11] Washington offered a special society in which the politically powerful met by day to administer the country's business and then dined and danced by night to underscore their prestige and importance.[12] Robert's cultured manners and Rose's beauty and spirited nature went a long way toward making them favorites in Washington society. Their life was filled with parties at the White House and at cabinet members' homes. Guests at these gatherings savored elaborate treats: molded ice cream and sculpted castles made of sugar-glazed fruits. Some of the parties were intimate socials; others were crowded affairs. Rose also took part in a whirl of female visitation that complemented politics in Washington.[13] She understood the importance of following society's rules of proper behavior, but there were times as a young wife when the strictures wore on her, and she rebelled against them. At these times "Wild Rose" emerged, and her mischievous character took over. For instance, during a visit by Robert's younger sister Mary, the two young women found themselves "in a frolicsome humour" one night, surprising their neighbor by appearing at their door "wrapped up in sheets" and laughing at their neighbor's astonishment.[14]

In 1850 Robert decided to move to the new state of California, after having written several books about the territories along the Pacific coast.[15] The couple left their daughters—Florence, Gertrude, and Leila—under the care of relatives in Washington and traveled first to Mexico City where Robert worked in the archives, then settled in San Francisco where Robert opened a land commission

office at 145 Montgomery Street.[16] They were just settling in when the newly chartered city caught on fire. As Robert tried to save his office, Rose took in victims of the fire. She wrote a friend that she "made a good sergeants assistant that night and dressed many of the unfortunate beings, who have since told me that they felt as if possessed by deamins [*sic*] till my voice recalled them to reason," evidence of her "commanding personality."[17]

In October 1853, pregnant with her fourth child, Rose traveled back to Washington to give birth among family and friends. While Rose was back east, Robert slipped off a plank pavement along Pacific Street in San Francisco and fell down an embankment. Though he did not believe his injury was serious enough for Rose to travel with a newborn baby, he died six weeks later.[18] In a brief will, Robert left all of his "estate both real and personal" to Rose, his "beloved wife."[19] Robert's estate consisted of only a couple of properties and some securities, but it enabled Rose to settle into Washington society with her daughters in a small house at 398 Sixteenth Street, which she furnished with "rich and luxurious" furniture, "valuable pictures," and "several pieces of statuary."[20]

As the nation became embroiled over the possible extension of slavery in the West, and as the political parties tried to reach compromises and pass resolutions to mend the growing rift between North and South, Rose discussed events with an eclectic mix of politically powerful men over her dining table. James Buchanan, William H. Seward, and Jefferson Davis visited her home often, as did Stephen Douglas, who had married her sister Ellen's daughter. Amid her social activities were rumors in Washington society that she was romantically linked with Republican senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts and Brigadier General Erasmus D. Keyes, as well as Senator Joseph Lane of Oregon, a proslavery former resident of North Carolina. Whether or not she was inclined toward romance, Rose enjoyed her "intimate acquaintance with public men and public measures" because it allowed her a "means of watching the progressive development of the designs of these leaders of opinion in the Federal States."[21]

Rose Greenhow evinced southern proclivities before the South seceded and war began. She claimed to be connected to the "noble State of Virginia," because of family and marriage. For a time South Carolina senator John C. Calhoun had lived with Rose and Robert in Washington and became a special favorite of hers, someone she credited with shaping her political ideas. Since Calhoun had authored South Carolina's Nullification Doctrine in 1828, suggesting the state secede from the Union then, it is easy to imagine those same rebellious threads of independence woven into Rose's political psyche. Additionally, after her imprisonment for spying during the war, in a letter she wrote to Secretary of State Seward, Rose claimed that the North had waged a crusade "against the

institutions of the South" for years. As she saw it, the abolitionist threat against the South was "a means to subjugate that section," and even though southern congressmen had attempted resolutions and compromises to halt "the impending crisis," war became inevitable. Clearly, Rose had always been a southern sympathizer, and she would, if possible, aid the South in its war effort.[22]

Warfare gains legitimacy through national rhetoric, compelling citizens to take part. Young men grow up hearing war stories and understanding that there is a certain virtue in being willing to die for a cause. Women are told war stories and are summoned to help on the home front and to applaud men's heroism. Men fought. Women did not. Men risked their lives. Women risked their men. The rhetoric of the South that fueled women's patriotism compelled them to offer up their men to confront the dangers of battle, a direct contrast to the nurturing role women had to fill. Women during the American Civil War are usually studied as witnesses or as victims of the grand drama, rarely as participants.[23]

Rose O'Neal Greenhow knew well the rules of the patriarchal society into which she was born. Those rules not only restricted her rights but also afforded her protection and deference from gentlemen. She did not don a soldier's uniform and fight as a few women did, but she found ways to aid the war effort. At the same time that her social standing relied on how well she adhered to her prescribed gender role, she used that social standing to protect herself and to garner information. Her class status, integrated with her sex and her character, gave Rose the tools she needed to help the South.

Spying was one way women could aid the war effort. Nineteenth-century gender construction made women particularly suited to the task. They were expected to listen politely to male conversations without injecting their own opinions.[24] Listening often provided useful information. Fashion also proved useful. The trend in long hair tied at the nape of the neck offered an excellent place to hide notes and instructions; voluminous skirts and gathered sleeves easily provided spaces to hide information and contraband. Some women hid messages in skirt hems, pin cushions, the false bottoms of egg baskets, or bread rolls. And even if a woman might be suspected of carrying information to the enemy, the rules of modesty prevented too close an inspection unless she was taken into custody and searched by a matron.[25]

The art of espionage had not reached the level of science by 1861, even for males hired for the purpose. Yet the Civil War became, according to Harnett T. Kane, "a spy-conscious war."[26] Spies for both sides had to be innovative, making use of whatever means came to hand. Gender construction also dictated the

level of jeopardy for those who were caught. Female spies were imprisoned or sent beyond the lines; men were usually hanged.[27]

Women gathered intelligence in two ways: some traveled to theaters of war to gain information; some held social positions that drew the information to them. An example of the former was Canadian-born Sarah Emma Edmonds, who disguised herself as a man and as a slave named Ned and drew sketches of fortifications she was ordered to help build. There was also Cuban-born Loreta Janeta Valezquez, who formed her own regiment to follow her husband when he joined the Confederate army. After his death she continued her disguise and became a double agent named Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Examples of women using their social positions to gather intelligence include abolitionist Elizabeth Van Lew, who invited high-ranking Confederate officers and officials into her Richmond home and listened to their conversations. Then there was Antonia Ford of Fairfax Courthouse, Virginia, who also listened quietly to conversations in her father's elegant parlor. By informing Colonel John S. Mosby of a party they would be hosting in her home, she helped Mosby's men capture the guests quietly, one-by-one, as they left the party.[28] Rose O'Neal Greenhow is also an example of the female spy who found intelligence delivered to her. The challenge for her was to get it to Confederate officers who needed it.

Before leaving the Union army to join the Confederates, Lieutenant Thomas Jordan of Virginia, a handsome man who had been a journalist before the war, began drawing people together in Washington who could gather intelligence against the Union and send it south. One member of his spy ring was Rose O'Neal Greenhow. She was a perfect choice for the venture since she had been socially linked with partisans from both sides before the war. Jordan gave himself a code name—Thomas John Rayford—and devised a cipher for her to use that ultimately proved too easily decipherable but worked at least to help General G. T. Beauregard defeat Union brigadier general Irvin McDowell at the first Battle of Bull Run.[29]

Through at least two rounds of messages, Rose was able to inform Beauregard of McDowell's troop size, location, and date he planned to move toward Manassas.[30] She sent the first message through a young woman in the spy ring named Betty Duvall, who tied the message into a rectangle of black silk, which she then hid in a knot of her long, equally black hair. She dressed as a market girl, rode in a wagon out of the city, then rode on horseback to Fairfax Courthouse and delivered the message to General M. L. Bonham, who forwarded it to Beauregard.[31] Never naming her sources, Rose admitted that she gained much information from her connections with the socially and politically pow-

erful in Washington and would have, under normal circumstances, refrained from repeating any of it as the rules of polite society demanded. But because of the disintegration of "relations of the North and South," and her desire to support the Confederacy, she was never conflicted about her decision to send information forward.[32]

The size of Jordan's cohort of spies grew with Rose's next message to Beauregard when Jordan sent G. Donellan to her with a request for information written in cipher and headed with the caption "Trust bearer." This time she warned Beauregard that Federals intended to "cut the Winchester railroad" to keep Brigadier General Joseph E. Johnston from reinforcing Beauregard at Manassas.[33] Because Rose had been able to learn the numbers Beauregard would be facing and when, he had time to inform other commanders to join him. For this reason, Beauregard credited Rose with the Confederate victory at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861.[34]

Others who aided Rose were Bettie H. Hassler; a Mrs. Phillips, the wife of a former Alabama congressman; Lillie Mackall, a plain young woman who could carry messages and listen at doors without attracting attention; and Lizzy Fitzgerald, an Irish girl who was "quick-witted" and "entered keenly into the sport," according to Rose.[35] Men who helped in the venture included "a canny Scotchman, whom they called Robert," a banker alternately named William Smithson and Charles Cables, Rose's dentist Aaron Van Camp, and government workers, lawyers, and merchants.[36]

It is uncertain if the two events are related, but soon after the Union defeat at Bull Run, General George B. McClellan formed the Secret Service, naming Allan Pinkerton as its head. As he began to put together his organization with "trustworthy men and discreet women," Pinkerton received orders from Thomas A. Scott, Acting Assistant Secretary of War, to begin surveillance of Rose Greenhow, a southern woman "of pronounced rebel proclivities."[37]

According to Pinkerton, the night he began watching Rose O'Neal Greenhow's house began wet and stormy and grew increasingly worse. When a Union captain entered the house, Pinkerton needed a boost to see inside the parlor windows. He removed his shoes and climbed on the shoulders of two of his men. From this perch, he was able to watch Rose and the captain in conversation that included the captain's pointing to a map, furthering Pinkerton's suspicions. When the captain left the residence, Pinkerton and one of his men followed, with Pinkerton suffering the trek wearing soggy stockings. Ultimately the captain noticed them. He ducked into a guard shack and sent out four officers to apprehend his shadows, then had them held overnight when they refused to answer his questions.[38]

Teeth chattering from the cold of his cell and wet clothes, Pinkerton spent the night with prisoners who "were stupidly drunk." Finally getting word to Scott the next day, he and his employee were released and the tables were turned on the captain, who was promptly arrested.[39]

Pinkerton continued to watch Rose's house and noted that several "prominent gentlemen were received by the fascinating widow." One man visited often, and Pinkerton believed he had "a number of men and women under him by whom the information was forwarded to the rebel authorities." His name was Michael Thompson, an attorney, who was arrested not long after Rose was taken into custody.[40]

Rose became certain she was under suspicion and soon might be caught. She knew she was being followed and, on occasion, successfully negotiated a countersurveillance maneuver, turning suddenly to follow her followers. These moments seemed to amuse her, illustrating her mischievous character, and she seemed to see it as a mere prank like those she had pulled as a young wife in Washington society.[41]

But the situation turned serious when Greenhow was placed under house arrest on August 23, 1861. One of the arresting officers was Pinkerton, though he introduced himself to Rose as "Major Allen." She had known it was coming. While conversing with a neighbor on the street, she noticed that two men who had been following her were waiting at the corner. She told her companions that if she put her handkerchief to her face, to spread the word that she had been placed under arrest. Then she shoved a piece of paper into her mouth and swallowed it just before Pinkerton and his men approached and escorted her into her house.[42]

Once inside, she asked Pinkerton what he intended to do. He told her they would be searching her house. The men found fragments of a note from Donellan in her stove, telling her to trust Colonel Thompson to carry messages from her. The search moved quickly throughout her house, leaving beds, drawers, and wardrobes "all upturned." She wrote later that "every scrap of paper, every idle line was seized."[43]

During their search, however, the men paid less attention to Rose than to their search, so she was able to destroy papers in her pocket and, "stealing noiseless to the library in the dark," retrieve a folio of papers and send them out of the house in Lillie Mackall's boots. The search continued for seven days, and she watched with amusement as the government's men picked through areas from which she had already retrieved and destroyed papers that could have been damaging to her.[44]

Rose's home became "Fort Greenhow"; the government began incarcerating

other women there who were suspected of delivering information to the enemy. Rose watched as her "parlours were stripped of their furniture, which was conveyed into the chamber for the use of the prisoners." She suspected that some prisoners were actually government employees planted there to spy on her.[45]

One resident was very important to Rose—her young daughter, "little Rose," born just before Robert's death. Rose worried about her child living under these circumstances, only allowed to play outside when under the supervision of government employees. While for a time they had enough food to eat, it eventually was "reduced in quantity and quality" until friends began sending food for the child so that "she should not cry herself to sleep from hunger." Although little Rose received daily exercise, Rose was not allowed outside at all.[46]

For a time after her arrest, Rose was still able to gather information and send it to the right people. One message read: "Tell Aunt Sally that I have some old shoes for the children, and I wish her to send someone down town to take them, and to let me know whether she has found any charitable person to help her to take care of them." What she actually meant was "I have some important information to send across the river, and wish a messenger immediately. Have you any means of getting reliable information?" Eventually the Provost, who read all of her outgoing mail, directed that all of her mail should include full names and no ambiguity, to which she responded that she "was gifted with no faculty to divine what he might consider ambiguous." Before long, the government kept an ever tighter rein on her.[47]

The government's goal in its treatment of Rose O'Neal Greenhow was to make sure she bore no more dispatches to the enemy. Her library window was covered, her journal and "every scrap of paper" were removed from her desk, and she was eventually refused any visitors. If a guard relaxed his vigilance at all, he was demoted, jailed for thirty days, and lost three months' pay.[48]

In January 1862 she and little Rose were moved to Old Capitol Prison on orders of Allan Pinkerton. The prison had been the temporary quarters for Congress after the British burned the Capitol during the War of 1812. After Congress moved back to the restored Capitol, the building was turned into a boarding-house, located on the site of today's Supreme Court building.[49]

Rose's quarters lacked many of the amenities she was accustomed to. Her room was at the back of the building with a view of the prison yard, though if she attempted to take advantage of that view, a guard pointed a musket at her and demanded that she get away from the window. The room was ten by twelve feet in size and furnished with a straw bed, a small feather pillow, wooden chairs and table, and a small mirror. At night the walls "swarmed with vermin," which she burned with candles. She also found "vermin" in her clothes when they re-

turned from the laundry. Little Rose complained of the hard bed, so Rose folded up her clothes to add to the padding.[50]

Although her physical conditions were troubling, Rose O'Neal Greenhow never worried about her legal standing. Her arrest came before the suspension of habeas corpus, so she hoped to "force the issue between the civil and military authorities," actually wishing for a trial to clear her name. Ultimately she received her day in court in March 1862 without the aid of a lawyer. Hearing her case was a panel of U.S. Commissioners. At that point they informed her that she was charged with treason, against which she responded that she had had considerable time to study the Constitution over her eight months of confinement and found nothing in it to "justify a charge of that nature against" her. She knew they needed "two respectable witnesses" to sustain the charge and knew also that the government could not produce them. All they had were fragments of notes and letters that might or might not have contained military intelligence, given her skill with intentional ambiguity.[51]

In the course of the session, the commissioners asked how she had "managed to communicate, in spite of the vigilance exercised over" her. She responded cryptically, "That is my secret." When told that General McClellan credited her with causing him to change his plans four times, she asked them why, since she would have had to get such information from high-level officials, they chose to bring charges against her without investigating those who had given her the information. Despite her taunts, the commission decided to send her south.[52]

Others disagreed with the commissioners and tried to interfere with her release. McClellan did not agree to it until the Confederacy accepted the terms of exchanging two Federal agents awaiting execution in return for the release of Rose and two other women being held at Old Capitol Prison.[53] After ten months of confinement, Rose O'Neal Greenhow headed south on June 1, 1862. After settling into her quarters in Richmond with little Rose, she received a visit from Jefferson Davis, thanking her for helping the South succeed at Bull Run.[54]

Rose spent time in Richmond writing a book about her imprisonment and taking on the patriotic role many women participated in during the war: caring for soldiers in hospitals. In September 1862 she traveled to Winchester, Virginia, to visit Robert's sister, Mary Greenhow Lee, by that time also a widow. The two sisters-in-law caught up on their news and visited hospitals together. According to Mary, "Sister was very kind & useful, dressing wounds & cheering the men."[55]

After returning to Richmond, Rose prepared for a trip to Europe. By August she was ready to depart with a couple of goals in mind: to get her manuscript published and to help gain recognition for the Confederate States of America from Britain and France. Having left everything behind in Washington, she

supported herself by selling her railroad stock, speculating in cotton, and accepting a check for $2,500 from the Confederate government for her "valuable and patriotic service."[56] The first leg of her trip was to Wilmington.

Two decades before the war, Wilmington experienced a growth spurt, especially as a transportation hub. Completion of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad gave the state three railroads and two roads to Wilmington. Deepening the channel of the Cape Fear River to allow larger oceangoing vessels, along with more steamboat traffic on the river connecting Fayetteville with Wilmington, provided more efficient movement of goods and began to give the port city a cosmopolitan character. The town also added more hotels, built brick sidewalks, and installed gas lighting for the streets.[57]

During the war the city's industries grew to accommodate the Confederacy's needs. Two large shipyards—Beery's and Cassidy's—built and repaired ships. Scarcity of salt for the Confederacy prompted the start of saltworks there by boiling sea water in large shallow pans to hasten evaporation. Near one of the shipyards a compressing business prepared the thousands of cotton bales exported from Wilmington by blockade runners.[58]

In fact, blockade running became one of the most important businesses of the city during the last two years of the war. When the war began, the Lincoln administration devised a plan to choke off the South from trade by blockading Atlantic and Gulf ports. Although building and manning a blockade fleet large enough to handle three thousand miles of coastline was nearly impossible, by capturing New Orleans in April 1862 and thus inhibiting blockade running in other Gulf ports, the Union reduced the need to stretch its fleet that far. Norfolk, Virginia, would have been a good inlet for supplying the South, but the nearby Hampton Roads center for the U.S. Navy made it unsafe for blockade running. Charleston harbor was an ideal port for trade, which led to an increased presence of Union naval forces to enforce the blockade there, thus rendering it less safe as well. By 1863, with improvements Wilmington had made to the channel and with the construction of Fort Fisher on shore, the little town became a bustling trade center with blockade running the focus of its economy.[59]

According to Alan Watson, the city that had been "a center of culture and refinement, inhabited by many old families of hospitality, intelligence, and polish, . . . became a fortified entrepôt of Confederate trade and a cauldron of soldiers, speculators, and thieves." Blockade runners were predominantly operated by English and Scottish firms that were willing to take the risks involved in avoiding the U.S. Navy. Although the first runners used any ship available, eventually the majority of vessels used were made by British companies and designed specifically to run the blockade. They carried mostly cotton, tobacco, and

turpentine, with cotton taking up most of the space. They brought back needed medicines, ordnance, and supplies for the South. Blockade-running entrepreneurs injected money into Wilmington's economy, but their rough celebrations after a successful run diminished the southern city's refined character.[60]

Rose Greenhow and her daughter spent a short time in Wilmington before departing in August on board the blockade runner *Phantom*. After a three-week stay in Bermuda, she arrived at Falmouth harbor on the English coast on September 13, 1863. Within four days of her arrival in London, Rose accomplished the first of her goals by signing a contract with Richard Bentley to publish the account of her imprisonment. Although she agreed to sales of the book in Europe and the United States, she shrewdly reserved the right to publication of her book in the Confederate States.[61]

Having taken care of personal business, she set about the task of furthering the South's cause. Ann Blackman, in her biography of Greenhow, observes that Rose "was probably the first American-born woman to represent a government . . . on foreign soil." Indeed, Rose's social engagements in London and Paris centered on public relations for the Confederate government. She tolerated the stiff rules of European society for a chance to charm high-powered guests toward her cause.[62]

Bearing dispatches, Rose delivered a letter from Confederate president Jefferson Davis to the Confederate emissary to Britain, James Murray Mason, telling him that it was useless to continue trying to gain diplomatic recognition from England and to return home. She requested a new cipher from Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin to enable her to communicate with the South with less risk. And still relying on a network, she developed a friendship with the Confederate agent in charge of military shipments from England to help her send messages to Richmond.[63]

Her main assignment, however, was to persuade those in power to recognize the Confederacy's sovereignty. She met with high-powered officials in England and France, and even with Napoleon III at the Tuileries Palace. Although both countries expressed sympathy for the Confederate cause and were willing to supply the South, especially in exchange for cotton to England and tobacco to France, neither offered formal recognition to the Confederate States of America without the other agreeing to do the same, and both were swayed by their public's opinion against slavery.[64]

Bearing a letter from James Murray Mason to President Davis and to Secretary of State Benjamin, as well as a letter from John Slidell, emissary to France, Rose boarded the *Condor* to return to America after spending a year in Europe, leaving little Rose behind at a boarding school operated by the Convent du

Sacré Coeur. The *Condor* stopped first in Bermuda, then continued to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where it refueled and picked up more passengers before heading to Wilmington. Blockaders greeted the *Condor* as it neared New Inlet at 3:30 a.m. on October 1, 1864. Within three hundred yards of Fort Fisher, as Confederate batteries on shore fired warning shots toward the Union ships, the *Condor*'s pilot tried to maneuver the narrow passage of the channel but, seeing a shadow of another blockade runner that he mistakenly thought to be a federal ship, he swerved too far and ran the *Condor* onto the shoals.[65]

Fearing another stint in federal custody, Rose insisted upon going ashore before the blockader got to them. The captain was certain they would have a better chance staying on board and waiting for the high tide to free the ship but Rose's "commanding personality" overcame the captain's wisdom. They lowered a lifeboat holding Rose, two passengers, and two seamen to row them ashore. Almost immediately waves swamped the small boat and everyone fell overboard. All the men were able to make their way back to the overturned boat and hang on. But Rose wore a heavy black silk dress with quarter-ounce gold coins from the sale of her book sewn into it, and carried around her neck a leather pouch filled with more gold along with her last dispatches, letters from Mason and Slidell. She did not resurface.[66]

Rose's body washed ashore later, as did the leather pouch containing the coins and letters. The commander at Fort Fisher, Colonel William Lamb, had her body carried on a litter to his wife, Daisy, who prepared the body to be taken to Wilmington on the steamer *Cape Fear*. The women of Wilmington waited along the wharf for, as they reported, "the lifeless form of her who had been so zealous, so devoted, and so self-sacrificing an adherent of the cause dearest to all their hearts." Because of their appreciation for a woman who had taken on a more public role than they were able to do, they planned Rose's funeral with "respect and affection for her who endured imprisonment, sickness, losses of various kinds, and finally death itself."[67]

The president of Wilmington's Soldiers' Aid Society was Eliza De Rosset, married to Armand De Rosset, whose family had migrated from France in the mid-eighteenth century, making their fortune in rice production. By the Civil War, Armand and his wife were members of Wilmington's elite. Married thirty years and raising nine children by 1860, the couple's wealth came from Armand's medical practice, a mercantile firm, and interests in the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, as well as their rice plantation.[68]

The work Wilmington women did for the Confederacy gave them a sense of fulfillment. Socially defined roles for women kept them safe from actual fighting, but they found ways to be useful that made a vital difference for Confeder-

ate soldiers. They aided the war effort by working in hospitals, feeding soldiers, and making clothing and bandages for them, all expressions of their patriotism that fit gender ideals.[69]

Work performed by Wilmington's Soldiers' Aid Society during the war was an extension of the benevolent work women had performed for years. St. James Episcopal, for example, incorporated in 1833 the Ladies Working Society, through which women of the church raised money for such charities as providing free schooling for the poor. Their work during the war stemmed from the same beneficence. As president of the society Eliza De Rosset gave up a portion of her home to store food, clothing, and medical supplies for soldiers. She organized sewing and cooking activities and helped nurse wounded and sick soldiers.[70] The Soldiers' Aid Society helped thousands of soldiers who came through Wilmington. Women like De Rosset, but also Mary F. Sanders and Eliza "Hallie" Hall Mutt Parsley, who later founded the Cape Fear chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, rolled bandages, knitted socks, sewed haversacks and canteen covers, and nursed soldiers to aid the South. They did not think of themselves as heroes, but they recognized those who were.[71]

When Rose's body was carried to Wilmington, Eliza De Rosset had it taken to her home. She cut Rose's hair to be sent to her daughters, then prepared her body for burial. She and the Soldiers' Aid Society planned an elaborate funeral more befitting a fallen soldier. An honor guard stood watch over her flag-draped casket. Both army and navy representatives as well as Confederate and local officials acted as pallbearers. A cortege of eight carriages, followed by townspeople, made up the procession through rain to the burial site at Oakdale Cemetery.[72]

On one level, the women of the Soldiers' Aid Society planned such an honorable observation because many of them, including De Rosset, had lost family members on distant battlefields and had not been able to see to their last rites, counting on others to do it for them. With no family members able to attend Rose's funeral, Wilmington's women served as surrogates just as faraway strangers had done for them.[73] On another level, women of Wilmington honored Rose for taking on a patriotic role they could not or would not have been able to do themselves.

Burying a stranger is one thing, but showing such honor and respect is another. It can only be explained by the fact that Rose's reputation and reports of her deeds had preceded her to Wilmington. Local women admired her public exploits. Rose's name had clearly been made public, something that initially caused her embarrassment since women of her class were normally protected from public exposure. Later, she came to enjoy and expect it. *Harper's Weekly*

had reported her arrest in its September 7, 1861, edition. Soon after, the *New York Times* editorialized that she should be "sent South immediately" to keep her from making a fashion of "the heroic deeds of Secesh women."[74]

The public could not seem to get enough of "Fort Greenhow" and its most prominent resident. As reporters described what they could see from outside her home, her house became a sort of tourist attraction. As Rose reported, "strangers visiting Washington thronged to see the residence of so 'noted a rebel.'" Not long after being incarcerated in Old Capitol Prison, she received a visit from a Mr. Wood, who had been offered $500 each from "a New York and a Philadelphia paper" for a story about her. She agreed to an interview, but Secretary of State William Seward stopped it.[75]

Rose O'Neal Greenhow's story has continued to pique interest and curiosity since her death. She has been featured in works about spying during the Civil War, including a recent pamphlet produced by the Central Intelligence Agency, and has been the subject of several biographies. One of the earliest, by Ishbel Ross, was published in 1954, and the most recent, by Ann Blackman, came out in 2006. Blackman's work benefits from an important additional source. The journal Greenhow kept during her trip to Europe just before her death was uncovered in 1965 by H. G. Jones, former state archivist and curator emeritus for the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Jones discovered the journal in the papers of David L. Swain, former governor of North Carolina, state supreme court judge, and president of the University of North Carolina. In anticipation of having the journal published, Jones produced a transcript that he loaned to Blackman, providing an important dimension to Greenhow's story.[76]

Public interest in Rose has also been stoked through the years by twentieth-century newspapers. For the fiftieth anniversary of the onset of the war, Greenhow made headlines again, being touted as the "Cleverest of Female Spies." In 1930 newspaper headlines named her "Spy Extraordinary," and in 1939, as war again threatened in Europe, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran an unflattering story about her, stating that she "boasted of a dozen acts for which any government in war would have been justified in hanging her." After the United States was again drawn into war in 1941, Greenhow was featured as "the alluring confederate spy" who "was one of the first prisoners to go before the Civil War military commission," the "prototype of the commission" scheduled at that point to try "eight German saboteurs."[77] Interestingly, Rose Greenhow has also been the subject of children's books in order to draw children into the historic memory of the Civil War era.[78]

Rose O'Neal Greenhow had written to Seward during her imprisonment that "every cause worthy of success has had its martyrs." Indeed, the obituary in the Wilmington paper equated Rose's efforts for the Confederacy with those of Joan of Arc for France. Clearly, although Rose had strained against conventional gender assumptions, Wilmington's women viewed her work not only as appropriate for the crisis they were all experiencing but also nothing short of heroic. This is probably the most significant reason these North Carolina women adopted her as one of their own.[79]

NOTES

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58. Howell, *The Book of Wilmington*, 137–38.

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66. Ibid., 299.

67. Newspaper clipping, October 1, 1864, ABP/DU; Blackman, *Wild Rose*, 300; Mary Sanders Notes, typescript, The Archives and Library, Lower Cape Fear Historical Society (hereafter Sanders Notes).

68. Blackman, *Wild Rose*, 300; Sanders Notes; Ngaire Isobel Robyn Smith, "What Will Become of the Aristocrats of the South?: Wilmington's De Rosset Family in the Civil War Era" (MA thesis, Western Carolina University, 2004), 1–2.

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72. Blackman, *Wild Rose*, 300–301; newspaper clipping, October 1, 1864, ABP/DU; Johnson, *Rose O'Neale Greenhow*, 89. Rose and Robert's daughter Gertrude had died not long before the war be-

gan. At the time of Rose's death, Florence was in London, Leila was at a convent in Wheeling, West Virginia, and little Rose was at the convent in Paris (MGL 669 [August 20, 1864]).

73. Blackman, *Wild Rose*, 301; Smith, "What Will Become of the Aristocrats," 65–66.

74. Greenhow, *My Imprisonment*, 35, 94; *Harper's Weekly*, January 18, 1862.

75. "Secession Women in Custody," news clipping, November 29, 1861, M. J. Solomon Scrapbook, Special Collections Library, Duke University; Greenhow, *My Imprisonment*, 168, 276–77.

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Catherine Devereux Edmondston

"My lines are cast in such pleasant places"

SUZANNE COOPER GUASCO

November 1863 was a dismal time for the Confederacy. The year opened with the pronouncement of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which transformed the Civil War into a battle to end slavery and finally destroyed any likelihood that Great Britain or France would aid the southern pursuit of independence. July brought more devastating developments with Lee's defeat at Gettysburg and Grant's victory at Vicksburg. Additional military failures in Georgia and Tennessee in September and October only increased southern anxiety, leading Confederate president Jefferson Davis to issue a call for "humble thankfulness" for the "lesson [God] has taught in our recent reverses." As prices for food and goods skyrocketed, the Confederate government intensified conscription efforts to man the army, and increased taxes in a desperate attempt to fund the war. Whatever lessons God had in store for the South, it was hard to ignore the ominous political and military situation in the fall of 1863.[1]

For Catherine Devereux Edmondston, a wealthy North Carolina plantation mistress, the year was predictably hard. Her 1863 began with renewed threats along the North Carolina coast and fears that those Union forces would make their way inland. The pounding of heavy guns "booming over [their] peaceful fields" threatened to bring "the war home to our very thresholds." Throughout the year government agents continually appeared at her doorstep seeking food and supplies for the army. The male slaves from the family plantation were repeatedly requisitioned, pulled away from the fields to work on nearby fortifications and defensive efforts. News of bread riots in Richmond dismayed her, as did reports of Yankee brutality. She read "terrible" accounts, for example, of northern soldiers abusing "the defenceles inhabitants within their power—tales of murder & outrage at which the heart sickens & the blood revolts." Perhaps worst of all, she learned in October that her beloved nephew, Thomas Devereux

Jones, had been wounded at the Battle of Bristoe Station and lingered in severe pain at a hospital in Richmond. His death a month later was almost too difficult for her to bear.[2]

Despite the avalanche of bad news that year, Edmondston found much more to be optimistic about. Northern Peace Democrats were gaining popularity, and the New York City Draft Riots led her to hope that Abraham Lincoln would fail in his bid for reelection. In her life at home, she confessed she had never been happier: "My cares are few [and] my enjoyments many." Her home at Looking Glass plantation, situated far from the battlefield, shielded her from the worst aspects of the war. "Hitherto," she noted, "the rude hand of War has not been laid upon us either in our persons or our home. We suffer," she concluded, "only with our bleeding country." The plantation's slaves continued to work the fields, producing large quantities of potatoes, corn, and hay, all items readily sold to the Confederate army. Edmondston could be thankful that Looking Glass remained relatively untouched, its slaves industrious at home and in the neighborhood, and her husband far removed from the field of battle. Her Civil War lacked the violence and ruin experienced by so many of her fellow southerners. As devastation and disappointment increasingly blanketed the South, Edmondston repeatedly wrote "that my lines are cast in such pleasant places . . . that I want for nothing."[3]

Catherine Devereux Edmondston's Civil War experiences set her apart from most of her contemporaries, yet she was just as ardent in her defense of the Confederate nation as any other southerner. Certainly, politics was an important component of her emerging southern national identity. Like many of her fellow southerners, Edmondston supported states' rights and celebrated the virtues of the slave system. As the war continued, however, the common experience of sacrifice increased, and as historians George Rable and Drew Gilpin Faust have argued, the intensifying suffering precipitated a crisis of faith in the Confederate cause. Among elite southern women this was particularly the case. After 1863 southern slaveholding women became progressively disillusioned with slavery, the cause, and what they perceived to be a disintegrating patriarchal system. In contrast, Edmondston's own absence of suffering made her relatively immune to these developments and left her unfailingly committed to the Confederate cause. For her, the superiority of the southern social order as demonstrated within the confines of her private domestic world became the foundation of her sense of Confederate nationalism. Amid the peace of her home she witnessed firsthand what the southern nation was defending—a harmonious patriarchal order that ensured the prosperity and comfort of everyone from the wealthy white master to the plantation mistress to the enslaved laborer. From

"KATE" CATHERINE ANN DEVEREUX EDMONDSTON (1823–75)

Carte de visite by Anderson, Richmond, Va., c. 1870.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

her removed yet informed experience of the Civil War, Edmondston sowed the seeds of a pride in her own country that cemented her identity as a Confederate nationalist.[4]

Born on October 10, 1823, Catherine Devereux Edmondston (or Kate as her family affectionately called her) was the fourth of seven surviving children of New Bern native Thomas Pollock Devereux and his first wife, Catherine Ann Johnson of Connecticut. Devereux was educated at Yale and became a prominent and wealthy lawyer and North Carolina State Supreme Court reporter during the first third of the nineteenth century. Although his family claimed extensive land holdings, he resided in Raleigh where he happily fulfilled his public responsibilities. Devereux's legal career came to an abrupt end in 1839 when his wealthy bachelor uncle, George Pollock, died and he inherited a large estate that included several plantations and over fifteen hundred slaves.[5] Kate, then, was born into one of the wealthiest families in North Carolina.

Throughout her childhood, Kate enjoyed the love and support of a large family. She had five sisters—Frances, Elizabeth, Mary, Nora, and Sophia—and a brother, John. They were a close-knit family that only became closer emotionally after their mother succumbed to tuberculosis in July 1836. Kate was only thirteen when her mother died and surely felt keenly the loss of her mother's guiding influence. Frances, the oldest of the Devereux children, took on the responsibility of raising her younger siblings, a role she did not relinquish easily when their father married Ann Mary Maitland, the daughter of a New York merchant, in 1837. Although she never commented directly on the impact of her mother's untimely death, Kate likely shared her older sister Betsy's view. Even more than forty years after the fact, she commented with exasperation, "Oh! if our Mother had only been spared to us how different would have been the lives of every one of her children. . . . [W]e have all needed her," Betsy concluded, "everyone has suffered for the want of her love."[6]

All of the Edmondston children received a refined education typical of the southern planter elite. John followed his father's example and attended Yale College, where he studied the law. After graduating with distinction in 1840, he returned to North Carolina and managed the plantations and enslaved men and women he inherited from his grandfather. The Edmondston women were similarly educated, but by a northern tutor their father hired to live with the family at Conneconara, the family's main plantation home. This method of instruction produced a family of women who were remarkably cosmopolitan and intellectually confident. One need only look through the pages of Kate's private diary to see the truth of this claim. Published in 1979 by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, her *"Journal of a Secesh Lady": The Diary of*

Catherine Anne Devereux Edmondston reveals a woman possessed of a remarkable familiarity with a wide range of published works. She filled her diary with literary references to classical history, contemporary British political theory, the writings of prominent political figures who had lived from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, as well as excerpts from and reactions to speeches, sermons, and editorials composed by contemporary American political leaders. Indeed, her diary offers an unparalleled view of an elite southern woman's experience of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and readers come to know intimately a well-educated, politically engaged, and strong-willed woman who was unabashedly confident of her place in the southern social order and in the justice of the Confederate cause.[7]

On February 19, 1846, twenty-two-year-old Kate married Patrick Muir Edmondston, a younger son of Charles Edmondston, a wealthy merchant and banker from Charleston, South Carolina. Immediately following their marriage, the newlyweds settled in Charleston, where Patrick worked as a merchant with his father. A distaste for city life and the promise from Kate's father of a plantation in North Carolina (offered as the final payment on a $10,000 dowry) brought the young couple back to the Roanoke River basin. Because Looking Glass and Hascosea (their summer residence) were worth more than the promised marriage payment, the Edmondstons initially agreed to lease the property until they could repay the difference. Throughout the 1850s Patrick made all of the decisions regarding crops, improvements, and labor, but he had to deliver the plantation account books to his father-in-law each winter for inspection. As they worked to earn sole ownership of the property, the Edmondstons retained half of the annual net profit from the plantation and in the interim eagerly anticipated the day when Looking Glass plantation would become their own.[8]

In the summer of 1860, Kate's father unexpectedly transferred ownership of the Looking Glass and Hascosea plantations to the Edmondstons, a gift that may have been premature because Devereux's economic standing was not as solid as it appeared. Less than a year earlier Kate's older brother, John, confessed to their sister Mary that their "father's estate has never been more than half what it seemed to be & the reverses which we have suffered in the last ten years have reduced him from a rich man to one in easy circumstances only." The truth of the matter was that the senior Devereux "still owes large sums of money." While he planned to reduce this debt "by sales of land & negroes," John insisted that his "father takes more sanguine views of his affairs" than he should. "Unless he has a run of luck in both crops & prices which is foolish to look for he will never live to pay his debts."[9] So, although he seemed financially sound by all outward appearances, Thomas Pollock Devereux was not really in a position to

transfer Looking Glass and Hascosea to his third oldest daughter. In June 1860, however, Kate either ignored these family financial issues or shared her father's optimism about the future, for she greeted the transfer with enthusiasm. "How glad I am that he has done it!" she declared. With this bequest, Kate and Patrick finally became the proud owners of nearly two thousand acres of land.[10]

The Edmondstons' days on the eve of the Civil War were filled with domestic activities. She worked in her garden, nurturing her dahlias and tending her fruit trees. Throughout the summer months, she also made blackberry wine and peach brandy and preserves, luxuries she both kept for herself and distributed liberally to neighbors and family members as gifts. When the tomatoes were abundant in September, she converted many of them to paste and canned the rest for winter use. Noticeably absent from her domestic tasks were all the chores associated with motherhood. Patrick and Kate never had any children, but she did not seem to mind. During a visit with her brother, John, and his wife, Margaret, for example, she acknowledged how "delightful" her nieces and nephews could be. "Do I wish for any of my own?" she asked in the privacy of her diary. "No, I believe not," she answered. "I am contented and thankful I can enjoy nieces and nephews without a pang." So, where the care of children might have filled her time between household duties, Kate instead rode through the plantation with her husband and inspected the crops. "I walk with him & enter into all his business," remarked Edmondston, "as keenly as tho I were a farmer too." Over and over, she observed the bountiful nature of their estate, noting in August and then again in November that their cotton and corn crops looked "finely." As the slaves harvested the fields in early December, the abundance she witnessed "reminded me of the psalmist's words, 'the valleys shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh & sing.'" For them, she noted, "it seemed literally true," for with each pass through the field the wagons were "running over" and she could not stop "smiling . . . [and] laughing with plenty."[11]

As was the case with nearly every elite southern planter, the Edmondstons' prosperity rested on the labor of enslaved men and women. Although they trusted the supervision of the field hands to an overseer, the Edmondstons exercised careful management of their enslaved people. In the fall of 1860, for example, Kate and Patrick stayed in the fields as the slaves brought in the first harvest under their ownership. She noted that "Ned led the 'Shuckers'" as they gathered nearly ten thousand barrels of corn for the market. She regretted, though, that many of the female field hands complained about their work. Kate refused to grant them any sympathy, however, confident that their true "aim & object" was to secure lighter work "in the house." All told, the Edmondstons owned eighty-eight slaves, who were distributed across the plantation.[12]

Kate often found the management of her domestic slaves more of a burden than a convenience. In early December, her frustration with Fanny, a kitchen servant who had "spoiled the breakfast," led her to banish her from the main house and call for a replacement, Becky, whom she feared would offer little improvement. In addition to managing the household servants, Kate was also responsible for the religious instruction of the entire slave community at Looking Glass. Though most of the children could recite their catechism, she acknowledged that "it is up hill work. . . . They learn nothing from me but the mere rudimants of Christianity." Perhaps most frustrating of all, they refused to "come to church even when Patrick has it for them." Still, she feared this negligence resulted from her own failings. "My difficulties I am convinced beset many a well intentioned mistress who like me because she cannot do what she feels she *ought* does *nothing*." Perhaps the real reason she found it so difficult to provide religious instruction was her suspicion that the slaves would offer "mere lip service" and continue "just as profligate . . . as their neighbors" regardless of her best efforts.[13]

Life at Hascosea and Looking Glass was remarkably idyllic, and little from the outside world disturbed the peace and harmony of the Edmondstons' family life. That began to change in the summer of 1860 when the emerging political crisis threatened to destroy the tranquility of Kate's family circle. As the presidential election of 1860 approached, "politics ran high" across North Carolina, and the situation was hardly any different among her relations. Like many residents of the Old North State, Kate's family members disagreed about the political situation. Her father, a lifelong Whig, privileged the Union above state interests. To her dismay, he repeatedly expressed his contempt for the radical views flowing out of neighboring South Carolina. "He thinks it all folly, childs play . . . & always winds up" abusing the Palmetto State. Her husband, Patrick; brother, John; and sister Mary and her husband, William J. Clarke, disagreed sharply with the Devereux patriarch. They accepted as inevitable a Republican victory and feared that the election of Abraham Lincoln would plunge the nation into a civil war. Kate tried to stand somewhere between these two positions. She leaned toward her South Carolina–born and –bred husband's view, believing that if the Republicans won the South must take a stand, perhaps a martial stand, to protect its interests. In October her stepmother's defense of the Union angered her so much that she defiantly promised "to go to South Carolina & load guns for her men to shoot" if Lincoln won. Still, in her calmer moments, Kate remained "hopeful" that "politics will hardly run so high" as to provoke a war. Like many southerners, Kate was, at heart, a Unionist.[14]

News of Lincoln's election and, later, that South Carolina had seceded from

the Union reached Kate as she traveled to Aiken, South Carolina, for the celebration of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of her husband's parents. Although she was hardly surprised by this turn of events, Kate continued to hope that the Palmetto State's decision would not influence the rest of the South. "One pearl lost from the glorious string! Pray God," she pleaded, "that it be not the beginning" of the end. She found that South Carolinians were united in their support for disunion. Everywhere she turned, residents of the state were preparing for war. Troops marched through Aiken on their way to defend Charleston. The town's women "displayed an enthusiasm & earnestness in their preparations for War that was almost sublime in its unity & self devotion." State leaders worked to strengthen Charleston's defenses by refortifying Forts Moultrie, Sumter, and Pinckney. Kate was impressed. "South Carolina having seceded from the U.S., amidst the jeers & laughter of the whole country calmly organized her own government & prepared for War singly and alone." Still, Kate was not ready to see North Carolina follow its neighbor's lead. "Let S.C. peaceably go her own way," declared Edmondston. "Perhaps after a little, when she sees that Mr. Lincoln does not meddle with Slavery, she may return & this threatened dismemberment of our country may be prevented." When the North Carolina legislature adjourned for the winter on December 22, the state's more conservative leaders fanned out across the landscape and held Union meetings, demonstrating that she was not alone in her view of the situation.[15]

By early 1861, however, Kate found herself increasingly open to the idea of secession. Her father continued to oppose South Carolina's actions, and her brother-in-law Henry Miller dared to defend the peace efforts of the federal government. When her older sister Frances criticized South Carolina and the South generally for sacrificing the Union "for the sake of a few negroes," Kate could not restrain herself. "This is to me," she exclaimed, "treason against Liberty." Echoing many of the claims that had filled radical newspaper editorials throughout the South over the previous six months, Kate insisted that more than a few enslaved blacks were at stake. "It is the country . . . & then the principle involved! I *yield nothing*—no compromise—where my *liberty*, my *honour*, dearer than life is concerned!" After the North's failed attempt to resupply federal forces in Charleston Bay and the secession of all of the Deep South states, Kate declared unreservedly her wish that "North Carolina would join with her Southern sisters—sisters in blood, in soil, in climate & in institution."[16] Her wish came true when North Carolina responded to Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand soldiers after the bombardment of Fort Sumter by unanimously approving a secession ordinance on May 20, 1861. Even the state's most conservative leaders, men like William W. Holden, acknowledged that "we cannot be-

come parties to the subjugation of our Southern brethren" and concluded that "*we must fight*." In the spring of 1861 the Devereux-Edmondston family joined the Confederacy with an enthusiasm and optimism about the future that would sustain them through four long years of civil war.[17]

Kate's world changed dramatically once North Carolina joined the Confederacy. Patrick had been preparing for war the previous winter and spring with his volunteer regiment, the Scotland Neck Mounted Riflemen. She knew Patrick was desperate to serve his country, and she wanted to support him, but she also did not want to lose him to the violence of war. Ultimately, she concluded that she could "not have him stay when he can strike one blow for our Freedom, our honour, our native Land!" She would find the strength to support him from home however she could. When Patrick received a commission in early 1862 (having resigned his captaincy with the volunteers), Kate struggled to be happy for him. "I ought to be happier than I am," she confessed to her diary, "but the prospect of long and uncertain separation eclipses for the present the glory & honor of serving his country." She gathered herself together however and promised to support him. "I will be a vessel made of honour! Courage! I will be worthy of my blood, of my husband." Like many southern women, Kate was determined to wear the mantle of sacrifice proudly.[18]

Several other male members of Kate's family likewise supported the Confederate cause. Her brother, John, received an appointment as a quartermaster and held the rank of major throughout the war. He secured for Kate's brother-in-law James Edmondston a position as his assistant. Three of her other brothers-in-law also served in the military. Her younger sister Sophia's husband, Josiah Turner Jr., was a captain in the Second Regiment of the North Carolina Cavalry. Mary's husband, William J. Clarke, served as a colonel of the Twenty-Fourth North Carolina Regiment. Amory Coffin Jr., who was married to Patrick's sister Jessie, was appointed a second lieutenant and stationed in Charleston for most of the conflict. Her nephews Thomas and Frank Jones served together in Company F of the Twenty-Seventh North Carolina Regiment. A third nephew, Thomas Devereux, became a courier for the Daniel-Grimes Brigade in 1863. In this way, the war took from the bosom of her close-knit extended family many of the men who completed her domestic circle. Indeed, more than three in four southern men of military age served the Confederate cause in some capacity, and the Devereux-Edmondstons were no different. Like many southern women whose men left for war, Kate attempted to temper her anxiety over the well-being of her family members. As she repeatedly reminded herself, she was duty-bound to support the men in her family, men who were determined "to do something for the Cause—something for our Country in its time of need."[19]

Kate followed the reports of military developments closely, fearful that the conflict would show up on her doorstep. Throughout the winter of 1861–62, rumors that General Ambrose Burnside intended to invade the North Carolina coast circulated throughout her neighborhood. When Cape Hatteras, Roanoke Island, and then New Bern fell to Yankee forces in the winter and spring of 1862, Kate was certain Burnside's troops would invade the interior of the state. "Albemarle Sound & its tributaries are now open to inroads & incursions of all kinds." As a result, the Edmondstons removed the harvested cotton from Looking Glass and stored it in temporary shelters more than twenty-five miles inland. She also instructed her slaves to help her pack "up my household goods to remove them from the enemy." On one other occasion, the Edmondstons were forced by the threat of an enemy advance to make plans to preserve their property. In the fall of 1862 Patrick contemplated sending some of his slaves to construct a rail line intended to supply coal to the battlefront. He only considered the option, because doing so would "place our men hands at least in safety." The remaining laborers were told "how to comport themselves & what to do in case of the enemy's occupation."[20] In the end, the Edmondstons stayed at their home and their slaves remained unmolested throughout the conflict.

Still, the war influenced nearly every aspect of life at Looking Glass and Hascosea. During the first months of the conflict, Kate and her slave women spent a great deal of their time cutting and sewing uniforms and tents for her husband's volunteer troops. She also sent provisions to Raleigh during the war. By December 1862 her days were filled with sewing and knitting. She sent "thirteen prs of socks" to the quartermaster in Raleigh. The following fall, she noted in her diary that "every one [was] busy with cards & spinning wheels" making clothes for themselves and the soldiers in the field. From one day to the next, they worked hard "cutting fatigue Jackets" as a neighbor read them poetry. When he asked how she liked a particular piece of verse, Kate could barely collect her thoughts together to offer an opinion. Instead, she found that "all my senses" were so "absorbed in one thing," the war, "that I have forgotten aught else. God help me!" she exclaimed. "Here I am sewing on Uniforms which may ere long be drenched in Blood, the blood of my neighbors, yes perhaps of my own husband," and yet she enjoyed the luxury of reading poetry. "Away with it!" she proclaimed and returned her attention to the task at hand, taking pride in the knowledge that she was one of many women working on behalf of the Confederate cause.[21]

The Edmondstons attempted to service the needs of the Confederacy more broadly as well. When the army needed equipment and labor, they shared their resources. During the first year of the conflict, the quartermaster for the Thirty-Fourth North Carolina requested the use of "our team and wagons to move the

baggage & equipage" from the railroad to Hamilton, a town located near the mouth of the Roanoke River. Two weeks later the officer showed up again to requisition "one fourth the able bodied men on the Plantation." Patrick willingly assented to the temporary inconvenience, noted Kate, "hoping that their labour *there* may protect us *here*." Government agents also stopped at Looking Glass and Hascosea seeking food and supplies for the army. To that end, the Edmondstons adjusted their crops, abandoning cotton and devoting their fields to corn and hay, two crops the army would need in abundance. In the spring of 1863 they adjusted again. "We have planted a larger crop of Irish Potatoes than we ever did before, in view of the need of our Army & and high prices they command." Kate confessed that she felt somewhat ashamed at taking government money, but the agents insisted on paying for what they foraged from the countryside. Perhaps to offset her sense of guilt, Kate sometimes augmented the provisions Confederate agents purchased with corn from the family's own stores. She was eager to do everything she could to sustain the Confederacy.[22]

Although she agonized about the potential loss of her husband, worried about the battlefield coming home, and worked tirelessly to supply and support the Confederacy, Catherine Devereux Edmondston was sheltered from the most brutal aspects of the conflict. The particular geography of the Roanoke River and the couple's distance from strategically important locations proved beneficial. Although General Burnside seemed poised to venture into their neighborhood in early 1862, Kate observed that "our crooked river with its terrible reputation for sudden rises and falls, which ordinarily is such a draw back to us, may now be the best bulwark" against the enemy. In April of that year she wrote that "all here is peaceful & happy—a bright contrast to some portions of our desolated country." As she pondered why she was so fortunate, Kate concluded that "God has mercifully protected me" from any direct experience of hardship. Instead, she lived "quietly amid my groves & gardens, wandering from tree to tree" and led "so delightful a . . . life that I could almost forget there was a war." She continued to acknowledge her good fortune in the summer of 1863 but confessed that she felt "ashamed that I suffer so little for the Cause, the glorious Cause of our Country's freedom!" Loyalty to the Confederate nation, she knew, was demonstrated through sacrifices and hardships she never experienced, yet she felt a devotion to the South as ardently as her less fortunate peers.[23]

Kate's location mattered, but the happiness, peace, and absence of suffering she chronicled could be attributed to the labor of Looking Glass's enslaved people as well. Slaves cleared fields, helped Kate make candles, aided her in the garden, hauled goods from house to house, and attended to her every possible need. They also delivered supplies to the army and relatives serving in the mili-

tary. Vinyard helped sort and gin the cotton and prepare it for market. Hopey made food for visiting soldiers and cleaned their clothing. Each spring a fleet of house servants cleaned Hascosea, washing wood floors, cleaning carpets, and rubbing down furniture. Dolly and Owen continued to wait personally on the Edmondstons. In return for their loyal service, the Edmondstons inoculated slave children against smallpox, held festival celebrations at the end of each summer and over Christmas, and oversaw marriages and births. From their perspective the paternalistic relationship fostered by the slave system was a positive good that benefited everyone involved.[24]

The absence of conflict in the area also meant that Looking Glass's slave quarters remained relatively undisturbed, something Kate may have mistaken for a continuing sense of loyalty and affection. Just a month after North Carolina seceded, Kate observed that "the servants, both house & plantation, behaved themselves extremely well & showed an amount of affection for & consideration of me that I had not believed them capable!" Indeed, they had remained so devoted to her that "we found everything flourishing both at Hascosea & the Plantation." Even when Union forces threatened to move up the Roanoke River in 1863, Kate noted that their slaves feared the encroaching enemy so much "that the Yankees will find them deaf to their blandishments." Whether or not their slaves really were on their side, as she preferred to believe, they allowed Patrick and Kate to continue the relatively high standard of living they had experienced before the war.[25]

Kate and Patrick's experiences with their slaves contrasted sharply with those of many other southerners. In the fall of 1862, for example, they learned that "at least ten thousand negroes have been stolen or enticed off from their owners since the fall of Roanoke Island. All our acquaintances," she noted, "have lost their men, many of them their negro women also." In early 1863 a family friend reported that "he has lost two of his negroes, both of them girls. Some of his men left" as well. Kate explained away many of these events by noting that the recalcitrant slaves often returned to their masters, claiming that "they had enough of the Yankees." She also often described their departures as involuntary or forced at the point of a bayonet. She could not imagine that any black man or woman would willingly abandon the social arrangements of the slave system. From her perspective, the southern social order provided them with a much better life than they could achieve on their own.[26]

Indeed, hundreds of thousands of slaves ran away, rose up, or were removed from southern plantations during the war. Kate's sister Nora, who lived in Union-occupied Tennessee, complained in September 1863 that "all of our Negroes have left," encouraged by the presence of Yankee troops. Ever since the

arrival of enemy forces, she found their "negro property was worse than useless for they do not work unless they choose." Their departure meant she and her husband had to perform all of the tasks on the farm. In early February 1864, Kate's sister Mary had a similar experience. Emboldened by the arrival of a regiment of black Union soldiers, several of her slaves became "exceedingly insolent & abusive." The majority of them packed up "everything they could find" and planned to leave with the soldiers. "When they left, every negro on the land went with them" and her sister Mary was "left entirely without help." Even more astonishingly, recorded Kate, was the experience of one of her cousins who "was slapped in the face by one of their own servants." By the end of the month, the temptation to flee to Federal troops had similarly infected Kate's father's plantation. Kate reported "the news that another of Father's young negroes had left his work & gone off"—two others had escaped the evening before. Patrick immediately initiated an investigation and identified his father-in-law's foreman, Jesse Bartly, as the ringleader of a widespread conspiracy that included as many as fifteen young men. Yet, and in spite of all this turmoil, Kate viewed African American resistance as an aberration or a product of Union meddling. In her version of things, blacks may have been troublesome, but they were largely contented.[27]

Death, like slavery, set Kate's experience of the Civil War apart from other southerners. While most families experienced the loss of loved ones directly and repeatedly, Kate was spared the heartache and death occasioned by the war. Her husband, Patrick, managed to avoid any direct confrontation with the enemy for the duration of the conflict. When his efforts to raise a battalion failed in late 1862, he remained at home. He was able to avoid conscription, first because he owned more than twenty slaves and then later because he volunteered to lead a regiment of the home guard. This last military duty did take him from home frequently toward the end of the war, and Kate could be rather dramatic about her fear for his safety. "With our best & dearest gone, exposed to Yankee bullets, to danger & to sudden death," she observed, "we sit quiet spectators of this gigantic game of War, a game where all we hold dear is at stake."[28] In truth, though, Patrick was always far enough removed from the battlefield to avoid any harm.

Even among those relatives who did serve in the Confederate army, a remarkably high number of them survived the conflict. Her brother John's posting as a quartermaster meant that he never engaged in combat. Kate's brother-in-law Josiah Turner Jr. was wounded early in the conflict, resigned his commission, and served in the Confederate Congress, where he avoided any life-threatening action. Another brother-in-law, James, survived unscathed because he never

saw action in the field. Her sister Mary's husband, William J. Clarke, a colonel in the Twenty-Fourth North Carolina regiment, was wounded at Drewry's Bluff in 1864 and later captured and imprisoned at Fort Delaware, but he survived the conflict. Several other brothers-in-law and nephews likewise encountered the enemy occasionally but escaped death. Considering that one in five southern men who served in the war died in the conflict, this record of survival is remarkable.[29]

The only two exceptions were Thomas Devereux Jones, a favorite nephew, and Leonidas Polk, her uncle. General Polk died at Pine Mountain, Georgia, after proving "himself an excellent officer, 'a good fighting General,'" and commanding "the affection of his men." His death, though, did not affect her greatly. Her nephew Thomas fought at the Battle of Bristoe Station, where he received his mortal wound. Kate learned that he had been transported to a hospital in Richmond and immediately dispatched her slave Owen to bring him home to recover. Within a few days, more information arrived, none of it good. The bullet had traveled through his kidney, and there was no hope of survival. Distraught, Kate gathered together some supplies to comfort him and boarded a train for Richmond. She arrived in time to witness his final moments. She prayed with him, "commending his soul to God," and then watched as his wife of only a few months comforted him through his last breath. When they thought "his last sigh drawn," his wife called out his name. To their shock "he opened his eyes, fixed them on her . . . and died with his last glance upon her!" The sorrow Kate felt was deep and long lasting. When news of his death spread to the rest of the family, Kate's sister Mary commented that "God has been very gracious to us in sparing our family so long, with so many exposed it is wonderful we have not before this lost some member of our family."[30]

The Devereux-Edmondston family fared better than their neighbors. When her neighbor Samantha learned that her husband would be conscripted into the Confederate army in August 1862, Kate could not help but comment, "How much better off am I, for no fear of personal bodily suffering enters into my anxieties, & she has serious ones." Almost a year later, another neighbor lost her husband. Mrs. Whitaker, Kate lamented, had already "lost four children within a few months & now her husband! His death, too, in a pecuniary point of view is a heavy blow to his family." She then listed a dozen other men killed in the July campaigns. At Gettysburg she noted that "all young men in the bloom of life, they make up the number of eleven young men of our acquaintance killed in this advance of our Army[,] . . . slaughtered in this horrible manner." While so many others tasted "the bitterness of Death," Kate and Patrick generally were spared the most devastating consequences of war—the loss of loved ones.[31]

Despite the fact that she was removed from the war, had few difficulties with her slaves, and experienced little personal loss during the conflict, Kate nonetheless cultivated a powerful sense of southern nationalism. Certainly, her Confederate loyalty had a political element. She celebrated the virtues of a limited government that left the South's domestic institutions undisturbed. Even before North Carolina seceded, she recognized the southern cause as a fight "for Freedom, for Rights, for Self Government." A year and a half later, she voiced her support for the southern political order indirectly by condemning the alternative. In the fall of 1862 she described "the Northern Governt" as the "picture of oppression & tyranny," indiscriminately trampling the rights of its citizens. From her perspective, the Union had become "a despotic government . . . in its most odious form." She attributed this transformation directly to the Union's decision to attack slavery. Quoting an antebellum proslavery leader, she wrote: "'Here lies a nation who lost their own liberty in a vain endeavour to give freedom to the Negro.'"[32] The Confederate nation that she championed was a nation that never interfered with the political and property rights of its citizens.

Yet politics alone cannot explain the depth of Kate's loyalty to the Confederacy, for she was quite critical of her own government. In early 1862 she complained about the ineffectiveness of the Confederate Congress in Richmond and expressed the hope that President Jefferson Davis would "ignore politics & politicians, & be the exponent of a free people—a people free from the shackles of party." A year and a half later when the Confederacy's military fortunes were particularly dire, she wrote, "The country rings with curses loud & deep" about Davis, who refused to remove General Braxton Bragg despite his repeated failures in the field. By December 1863 she acknowledged that her "admiration has lessened for Mr. Davis, lessened since the loss of Vicksburg" and worsened by all his subsequent military decisions. But these complaints never dampened her sense of loyalty. She consistently coupled her criticisms of Confederate leaders with pledges of forgiveness. In late 1863 she observed that although he "has made many mistakes," Davis had "presided over our fortunes with dignity & Christian forbearance. Toward a man so harassed . . . & with such heavy responsibilities," she concluded, "we should judge him kindly." Mistakes, mismanagement, and misplaced confidence aside, Edmondston remained devoted to the Confederate government even as she exercised her freedom to question its actions.[33]

Kate's sense of southern nationalism, then, was not based solely on political principle, on an unflinching faith in the Confederate government, or on a shared experience of sacrifice and suffering. Instead, it was fueled by her private domestic experiences. Her intimate and unchallenged experience of the plantation social order led her to ground her nationalism in the idea that the

patriarchal social order exemplified by her own household was the ideal way to organize society. Southerners, she believed, lived in a superior civilization in which wealthy white Christian gentlemen beneficently and paternalistically ruled the family, community, and state. Wealthy white mistresses supported their men and cared for those less fortunate than themselves. In return, she and other southern women like her enjoyed the protection of white gentlemen (and during the war all southern soldiers regardless of class fulfilled this role) and the respect and loyalty of the lower sort, particularly enslaved men and women. Catherine Devereux Edmondston's wartime experience reinforced and strengthened her brand of Confederate nationalism precisely because throughout the war, her understanding of the plantation ideal remained unchallenged. Her plantation flourished, and she wanted for nothing. Yankees never invaded her home. Her slaves never fled to enemy lines or challenged her authority. As a result, she never doubted the supremacy of the southern way of life, and the southern domestic social order became the central component of her southern identity and the foundation of her Confederate nationalism.

Tales of northern brutality in occupied southern territory only reinforced and strengthened Kate's particular brand of domesticated Confederate nationalism. Although she never experienced any violence directly, Kate read newspaper reports and letters from family and friends that described atrocities perpetrated against innocent civilians. In early July 1862 she learned that General John Pope had ordered his army to raid the countryside for supplies as they pursued the Confederate army through Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. "It is monstrous in its cruelty and contrary to the practices of all civilized warfare." Only a "savage and unchristian" enemy, she insisted, would threaten to abuse the helpless women and children left behind while their men fought on the battlefield. Newspaper reports from Louisiana were especially troubling in the spring of 1864. As the two armies attacked, retreated, and then attacked one another again, they left behind a wide swath of destruction and misery. According to this report, northern soldiers were particularly brutal. "The Yankees destroyed private property, dwellings, barns, Gins, Churches—everything in short which could be burned in revenge. The course of their army," explained Kate, "is a blackened desert, women & children turned out homeless & desolate to perish by the wayside!"[34] These accounts confirmed Kate's belief that northerners cared little for property or for the most helpless and dependent members of society.

Family correspondence confirmed the impression of northern "meanness" and incivility presented in the public print. In early July 1863 Kate received a letter from her brother-in-law James Edmondston, who was still serving as a quartermaster in the Confederate army. He revealed that "Yankee marauders"

had been laying waste to the communities north of Richmond. They have "ravaged the country, burning large quantities of wheat just housed, barns, houses, churches, even attempting to set fire to the shocks of wheat in the field." Worse still, they had "stolen negroes & horses & taken many private citizens prisoner." A few months later, Kate learned from her sister Nora just how difficult life was for Confederate loyalists in Tennessee. "Almost every day," complained Nora, "our lot is visited by some band of Yankees; they have taken off every saddle & bridle & even the wagon & sulky harness besides six horses, so that [her husband] Robert has to give up his [medical] practice." Still, she reassured her family in North Carolina that "we have been more fortunate" than many of their neighbors, whose houses had been burned. Such behavior, commented Kate, was typical "of these 'loathed Yankees.'"[35] There was little doubt, in her mind, that the Union army contained a lower sort of men who were incapable of the civility and honor required to sustain a stable and harmonious community.

For Kate, the contrast between the suffering endured by communities overrun by the war and her own peace and tranquility strengthened her loyalty to the southern way of life. Indeed, the superior southern social order was never clearer than during moments of northern aggression. In the fall of 1864 General Philip Sheridan was in the early stages of a brilliant campaign in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia that would ultimately conclude with maneuvers that blocked Lee's retreat past Appomattox six months later. Kate described Sheridan's advance as yet another example of the "blood & carnage [and] smoking ruins" inflicted by a charging Union army. As was often the case, she noted that "the cries of houseless women & children alone marked his track." Once again, the Yankee army had left unprotected innocent civilians, the very dependents the paternalistic southern social order was created to safeguard. The suffering endured by these fellow southerners was particularly disturbing, explained Kate, because news of their circumstances had interrupted the "lovely day" she had been enjoying at Looking Glass. "Every thing," she recorded in her diary, was "so still that you could almost hear the graceful fall of so many tinted leaves as they wavered down" to the ground. She could scarcely believe that on the same day hundreds of miles away "a bloody and cruel war devastates our land" and threatened to destroy her way of life. Where the South remained unmolested, the harmony, tranquility, and prosperity of the plantation order was preserved. She tended her flowers, rode through the fields with her husband, and watched as slaves worked diligently harvesting the season's crop. This perfect autumn day epitomized the world southern men risked their lives to defend, and she was reminded why she must keep the faith and work hard to support the eventual triumph of the Confederacy.[36]

When news that General Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox reached Looking Glass plantation in mid-April 1865, Kate struggled to make sense of the demise of her beloved Confederacy. As she sifted through the news, she latched onto details that would become the central elements of the Lost Cause mythology. Lee surrendered not because the southern cause had lost legitimacy or relevance. Instead, he surrendered only because he "was completely surrounded by Grant's and Thomas's armies." After three days of continuous fighting, Lee found his troops ravaged "by exhaustion, wounds, death, & . . . desertion." From her perspective, "he took the only course left to him & *surrendered*." In many ways, Lee became a stand-in for the Confederate nation as a whole. "He has been neither out manoevred or out generaled but *crushed*," she explained, "crushed by mere *brute force*, a force he could no more resist than he could the fall of an avalanche!" And, she declared, "We but love him the more for his misfortunes." Benumbed by the loss, Kate took solace in her continued devotion to the Confederacy. "What is it," she asked, "that sustains me?" Not the army and not the government, she responded. "It is faith in the *country*. Faith in the *Cause*, an earnest belief that eventually we will yet conquer!" Regardless of the outcome of the Civil War, insisted Kate, the Confederate nation could not be defeated.[37]

As she and her neighbors adjusted to this new reality, Kate complained that although conquered "our people do not feel it as they ought." Rather than being embittered and distraught as they should be (and as she was), her fellow North Carolinians had "accept[ed] the situation tacitly." On one May afternoon in 1865, for example, she and Patrick traveled from Looking Glass to Hascosea only to encounter "crowds of people . . . on their way to a Pic Nic," where they planned to dance, feast, and make merry as if nothing had changed. No one seemed to recognize, lamented Kate, that by doing so they were "dancing over their husband's, brothers, & sons graves. . . . O my Country, my Country," she wailed, "I look forward to the future with bitter forebodings when I see your children" so "forgetful." The situation seemed unlikely to improve when news of northern reconstruction plans filtered through her neighborhood. Some folks reported that new elections were to be held. Others claimed that General John M. Schofield had issued an edict emancipating all the enslaved men and women in North Carolina.[38] The plantation ideal she prized, Kate worried, was destined to disappear, no longer sustained by enslaved men and women she had relied upon for so long.

In the months following the surrender, it seemed as though her fears were unfounded. Even as she learned that her brother James's family had been forced to endure the humiliation of boarding a northern officer in their Raleigh home,

Kate happily reported that most of his "servants remained true to him." Indeed, she claimed that one of his enslaved women was so rude to the occupying Union soldiers that she had earned the "soubriquet of the 'Major Gen.'" Her father's slave quarters also remained largely undisturbed. He reported that only a few "were absent from work & [only] one man kept his wife at home contrary to plantation discipline." Of those who left, Kate revealed, nearly all returned "professing to have found out that they were better off" in their original situation. As for her and Patrick's slaves, she testified that "we have lost none here." In fact, she claimed, "the poor creatures seem as usual, only terribly dejected, & are much more tender & affectionate in their manner to us than ever before." As if to confirm her own view that the old southern social order should be preserved, Kate insisted that "it is a terrible cruelty to them, this unexpected, unsolicited gift of freedom, & they are at their wits end. Their old moorings are rudely & suddenly cut loose, & they drift without a rudder into the unknown sea of freedom." She suspected, quite naively, that her enslaved property preferred bondage to freedom.[39]

That Kate deceived herself about postwar race relations soon became clear. Fanny, who had attended Kate during an illness in early October 1865 with what she described as unparalleled devotion and affection, had inexplicably "left without bidding me goodbye." Vinyard and several other house servants similarly disappointed her. "Such idleness, neglect, & willful carelessness" she had never before witnessed. Henry, "our foreman & for fifteen years Mr. E's right hand man," had behaved even more disrespectfully. Despite enjoying considerable privileges on the plantation, Kate reported that Henry responded to his newfound freedom by becoming "moody, disappointed, & grasping." Here was a man who had been entirely corrupted by "Yankee poison." Before emancipation, the Edmondstons had trusted him with everything, and he had behaved affectionately and faithfully toward them in return. With a Union victory, however, "he became negligent and utterly careless of his master's interest" and had emerged as a leader of "all the discontent and grumbling on the plantation," Kate complained. Owen and Dolly, who according to Kate had remained "unwaveringly true, faithful, cheerful, industrious, & grateful" throughout the transition from war to peace, proved to be the only exception. For Kate, their supposed "desire only to live & to be treated for the future as they have hitherto lived & been treated" had little to do with their advanced age. Instead, they remained "faithful" and "never swerved from their duty" because they recognized the benefits of the paternalistic southern social order that placed white masters above black servants.[40]

Even more devastating than the difficulty she encountered with the freed-

men and -women who remained at Looking Glass was the financial impact of emancipation. As Kate noted in her diary, emancipation nearly destroyed her father's estate, diminishing its value by as much as $400,000. "What is sadder still," she revealed, was that "his liabilities remain the same, whilst his ability to meet them is lessened ten fold!" This setback was particularly disturbing to Patrick and Kate because they feared that Looking Glass would be confiscated to settle her father's debts. Her father attempted to contain the economic damage by enforcing a new set of regulations for those who worked on his plantation. Gone was the corporal punishment of the prewar era, now replaced by fines. The first new rule declared: "Any hand stopping work without the consent of his employer except in case of sickness to forfeit one dollar." Anyone who came to work late, read another regulation, "shall be fined not more than 5 cts." Tools "carelessly broken" similarly had to be paid for by wage deductions. Patrick also attempted to adjust to the new labor situation. He offered what he thought was a generous work contract to the hands still living at Looking Glass, but only one person agreed to his terms. All the rest of the workers, claimed Kate, displayed an "overwhelming indifference" and refused to commit to any work.[41] The situation hardly improved over the next several years, and by the end of the 1860s Kate's beloved plantation world and the racial hierarchy that sustained it had crumbled.

In 1868 Thomas Pollock Devereux declared bankruptcy and transferred the management of his estate to court-appointed trustees who worked on behalf of his creditors. Over the next several years, the trustees worked to alleviate the more than $290,000 in debts hanging over the estate and were forced ultimately to offer various parcels of land for auction. Kate responded to her family's rapidly declining fortunes by clinging evermore tightly to the old southern social order. In the spring of 1872, for example, she published anonymously a pamphlet entitled *The Morte d'Arthur; Its Influence on the Spirit and Manners of the Nineteenth Century*. In this forty-page booklet, Kate contrasted the barbarity of northern society and the soldiers who fought in the war with the civility and chivalry of the South and the gentlemen who so gallantly defended the Confederacy. Here she blamed the decline of the South and the destruction of a superior social order on the decisions of an oppressive and tyrannical North that had foolishly replaced the patriarchal harmony of the Old South with a new order that pitted black against white. Although she could no longer live in the world of her youth, Kate wanted her beloved plantation ideal to survive, at least in writing.[42]

The bitterness she expressed in this publication hardly dissipated as her father's legacy was divided and sold away. In 1874 the trustees of her father's

estate could no longer avoid placing Looking Glass on the auction block. In a desperate effort to retain control of the property, the recently widowed Kate offered the highest bid, but died before making the final payment. Her nephew Thomas Devereux Jr. inherited the plantation and settled the account, but as was the case with the rest of the family, he suffered from financial pressures that forced him to sell the property. Looking Glass plantation, the very symbol of the superiority of the South and a property that had been in the family for more than one hundred years, passed out of the Devereux family and into the hands of a Halifax County farmer. And with it, the plantation world Kate had cherished, promoted, and lived throughout the Civil War era was gone.[43] Still, until her death on January 3, 1875, Catherine Devereux Edmondston remained loyal to the South. The diary she left behind has ensured that her brand of domestic Confederate nationalism would endure in print, if not in fact.

NOTES

1. Jefferson Davis, "Proclamation," July 25, 1863, in James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy: Including Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861–1865* (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), 1:328. See also Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861–1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), esp. 50–85; William W. Freehling, *The South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 310–57; and Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

2. Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton, ed., *"Journal of a Secesh Lady": The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860–1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1979), 336–37, 351, 362, 378–80, 390–93, 480–89. See also Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Homefront* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 73–110.

3. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 344, 249, 368, 394, 447; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). See also Jennifer L. Weber: *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

4. Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 61–112; Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 1–79. See also Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 245–63; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), chap. 10; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1990): 1200–1228. On the plantation ideal, see William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

5. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* xv–xxiii. See also William S. Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 2:58–59, 5:116–17; Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 3–5.

6. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* xi; Elizabeth Devereux Jones to Sophia Devereux Turner, September 7, 1878, Josiah Turner Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC Chapel Hill, quoted in Terrell Armistead Crow and Mary Moulton Barden, eds., *Live Your Own Life: The Family Papers of Mary Bayard Clarke, 1854–1886* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), liv n8.

7. Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 2:59; James W. Patton, "Serious Reading in Halifax County, 1860–1865," *North Carolina Historical Review* 42 (April 1965): 169–79.

8. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* xxxiv–xxxvii. See also Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 2:137–38.

9. John Devereux to Mary Bayard Clarke, August 6, 1859, in Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 52–53.

10. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 4–5. Thomas Devereux revoked their deed in October 1861 (93–94). See also 1860 U.S. Census Slave Schedule for Halifax County, N.C., transcribed by Tom Blake, 2003, at http://freepages.geneology.rootsweb.ancestory.com/~ajac/nchalifax.htm (accessed December 27, 2011). See also Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 5:138.

11. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 5–19.

12. Ibid., 19–20. See also Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 175–216.

13. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 21–22. See Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 108–11; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 30–79; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

14. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 6–16. See also William L. Barney, *The Making of a Confederate: Walter Lenoir's Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46–52; Freehling, *The South vs. the South*, 17–43; Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

15. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 24–30. See also David H. McGee, "A Revolution in Raleigh: The Early Transformation of a Confederate State Capital, 1861," in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 41–58.

16. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 31–37. See also Dwight Lowell Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964).

17. "A Constitutional Union," *North Carolina Standard*, July 11, 1860, and April 20, 1861, in Dumond, *Southern Editorials*, 143, 506; Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 63. See also Barney, *The Making of a Confederate*, 14–52; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 9–29; William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1987), 82–110.

18. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 53–62, 90–116. See also Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 53–59, 139–59.

19. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 85, 159, 334, 485. See also *Histories of the North Carolina Regiments*, 2:426, 4:513, 517, 519. On the demography of military service in the South, see Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 28–29; Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 3.

20. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 115–27, 285, 447. See also Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 1–37; Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47–66.

21. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 60–64, 205, 210, 282–83, 326, 472. See also Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 30–113.

22. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 116, 121, 168, 268, 317–37, 401.

23. Ibid., 126, 186, 225, 403. See Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 196–219; and Rable, *Civil Wars*, 50–111.

24. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 141, 245, 299, 300, 307, 398, 461.

25. Ibid., 74, 89, 446. See also Drew Gilpin Faust, "Moment of Truth: A Woman of the Master Class in the Confederate South," in Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, eds., *Slavery, Secession and Southern History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 132–33.

26. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 273, 374.

27. Ibid., 463–64, 520–33. See also Freehling, *The South vs. the South*, 85–114; Armstead Robinson, *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861–1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).

28. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 155–59, 648. See also Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*.

29. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xi, 250–65.

30. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 480–96, 578; Mary Bayard Clarke to Willie Clarke, November 1, 1863, in Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 157.

31. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 231, 329, 432–44.

32. Ibid., 56, 282, 370. On Confederate politics, see McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*.

33. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 282, 304, 370, 431, 492, 506.

34. Ibid., 222–24, 559.

35. Ibid., 419, 463.

36. Ibid., 627.

37. Ibid., 694–96. See also Barney, *The Making of a Confederate*; Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 157–72.

38. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 708; Mark L. Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

39. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 710–11.

40. Ibid., 722–23.

41. John Devereux Papers, box 34, folder 15, North Carolina State Archives; Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 708.

42. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* xxxvii, 730–33; *The Morte d'Arthur; Its Influence on the Spirit and Manners of the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1872).

43. Crabtree and Patton, *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* xxiii–xxiv, xxxvii.

Harriet and Louisa Jacobs

"Not without My Daughter"

JIM DOWNS

❀ ❀ ❀

"READER, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are, nevertheless, strictly true."[1] Harriet Jacobs penned these now famous words as the prelude to her autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in 1861. Jacobs's emphasis that her narrative was not fiction did not prevent many mainstream scholars and readers from claiming that it was, however. Throughout the early to mid-twentieth century, white scholars typically dismissed her narrative, published under the pseudonym "Linda Brent," as abolitionist propaganda. They contended Lydia Marie Child, an ardent northern reformer who edited the autobiography, actually wrote it. This interpretation was not entirely without merit since many antebellum white novelists posed as black authors to provide what they claimed were authentic tales of slavery.[2] Meanwhile, throughout the end of the nineteenth and during most of the twentieth century, black scholars passed around copies of the then out-of-print book, reproduced various sections of it, and later photocopied it, circulating it underground. By the early 1980s, literary critic Jean Fagan Yellin had a hunch that "Linda Brent" might actually be Harriet Jacobs, a black woman whose name appeared in nineteenth-century newspapers. After following a number of leads, Yellin proved that Jacobs's story of an enslaved woman who faked her escape and concealment in an attic in order to remain close to her children was, indeed, a true story.[3]

The proof that Jacobs authored *Incidents* generated enormous excitement among historians, literary critics, and women's studies scholars in the 1980s, leading to the production of numerous articles and books about her life, the plot of *Incidents*, and broader studies on gender and antebellum slavery. Innumerable times, *Incidents* or Jacobs's name appears in footnotes and is mentioned at scholarly conferences. This fascination has also led to the republication of

HARRIET JACOBS IN 1894

Cabinet photograph by Gilbert Studios, Washington, D.C.

her autobiography with introductions written by notable scholars, including historian Nell Irvin Painter and literary critics Farah Jasmine Griffin and Henry Louis Gates Jr. In 2004 Yellin concluded the meticulous task of writing a biography of Jacobs based on twenty years of exhausting research, making it the first biography published on an enslaved woman in the United States. But the fanfare surrounding Jacobs does not stop there. Harriet Jacobs has become the subject of children's books, the hero of young adult stories, and a fundamental part of most introductions to the study of American literature, U.S. history, African American studies, and women's studies. She has even—according to some—been canonized, included as one of the most important literary figures of the nineteenth century.

Yet would she want all this attention? The scholarly assumption surrounding her has always been framed as part of a campaign to rescue her from oblivion. The implicit argument is that without the work of Yellin and others, we would never know of a woman born into slavery who eventually escaped from it, became a fugitive, had two children, survived the bloodiest war in American history, and then became a reformer and teacher of freedpeople during Reconstruction. Without the edited introductions, the biography, and now the budding scholarship on her children's lives, she would be unknown, lost, and hidden. But maybe that was her intention.

Scholars have worked painfully hard to recover Jacobs from racism and sexism that have hidden her in the annals of history, but perhaps Jacobs wanted to remain hidden and forgotten. As she explained in the prelude, "I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to me to have been silent about my own history." Yet Jacobs pushed beyond her own reservations to publish her story because she wanted "to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse."[4]

Unlike Frederick Douglass, whose autobiographies launched him into being one of the most famous African Americans of the nineteenth century, Jacobs did not choose this route. She was certainly part of the same abolitionist circles that cultivated Douglass for a public life, but she invariably opted out. Her qualifying remark that she was writing not to attract attention to herself but rather to inspire the two million women in bondage powerfully underscores her autobiography as a political work. While literary scholars and historians would certainly not doubt the abolitionist objectives of *Incidents*, what have not been explored are the effects of writing this autobiography. What were the consequences of Jacobs writing *Incidents* decades after the war ended? What did

it mean for her in the 1880s and 1890s to have written a book in the 1850s that attacked the institution of slavery during its peak? Did her experiences as a fugitive slave continue to haunt her in the late nineteenth century? Did she remain in hiding even after the war ended? Or did she get caught up in the wave of freedom and fervor of the postwar decades? And what did all this mean for her daughter, Louisa? She was also born into slavery and grew up with the knowledge that her mother was a fugitive, a woman on the run for over seven years. How did that shape how she understood the world decades after the war ended?

This essay attempts to answer these questions by arguing that Harriet elected to go "underground" by using her pseudonym Linda Brent long after the Civil War and Reconstruction ended, and she took Louisa with her. Despite their quite public personas before the war, their political work and commitments after the war placed them on the margins of society and shaped how they experienced the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During Reconstruction, Jacobs and her daughter committed themselves to living among and helping formerly enslaved people, providing them with clothing, food, support, and shelter. They also helped to build schools to teach people to read and to write, a form of political activism in 1865, especially since a few months earlier it had been illegal in several southern states to teach slaves to read and to write.

Furthermore, for the Jacobses to initiate massive campaigns to provide emancipated slaves with clothing, food, and shelter was political work given the climate of the postwar period. In 1865 President Andrew Johnson restored power to southern elites, offering little opportunity for ex-slaves to advance economically, politically, and socially. In 1866 when Radical Republicans gained control of Congress, they expanded federal relief programs and provided military protection that gave emancipated slaves access to basic necessities.[5] Prior to that, in the immediate aftermath of the war, Harriet and Louisa Jacobs and many other reformers challenged the federal government's indifference to the needs of freedpeople.[6] They worked in camps where Harriet reported dozens of freed slaves dying every day from smallpox, dysentery, and malnutrition. At a moment when the rest of the nation heralded President Abraham Lincoln as the Great Emancipator and praised the Union army for crushing slavery, Harriet and Louisa observed a darker reality where freed slaves died under the watchful eye of the federal government in refugee camps. Witnessing how liberation became a death sentence for many emancipated slaves, Harriet and Louisa Jacobs criticized the federal government's and northern officials' management of refugee camps. They pressured officials to increase rations allotted for freedpeople and demanded improvements to freedpeople's huts and shacks, turning their relief efforts into deeply political work.[7]

Today, scholars can easily laud Jacobs and her daughter for their work, referring to it as "benevolent" or even as part of "racial uplift," but these terms place a contemporary polish on relief work. Due to their work as reformers and their experiences in slavery, both Harriet and Louisa may have gone underground and purposely made themselves invisible to the public eye. In this way, Harriet and Louisa may embody what historian Darlene Clark Hine incisively refers to as the "dynamics of dissemblance." Dissemblance, according to Clark Hine, involves the moments when enslaved women "created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors."[8] That Harriet and Louisa's lives began in slavery, then moved to the muddy grounds of freedmen's refugee camps during Reconstruction, and ended during Jim Crow segregation suggests that they may have "shielded the truth of their inner lives." By the time Harriet died in 1897, the progress she and Louisa had fought for began to recede, and the future for Louisa seemed uncertain as the century closed. The steady ascent of southern white power and the increasing presence of Jim Crow segregation overturned much of what she and her mother had fought for and may have driven her into hiding.

The story of Harriet and Louisa Jacobs begins in North Carolina at the end of the eighteenth century, when Harriet's grandmother Molly Horniblow was separated from her mother and siblings and sold to a tavern owner in Edenton. Molly, who was the child of a white South Carolina planter and an unnamed enslaved woman, gave birth to Delilah Horniblow in 1798. Delilah's father remains unknown. In 1813, when she was fifteen years old, Delilah gave birth to Harriet. Her father is listed as Elijah Knox, a carpenter, who was the offspring of a white farmer and an enslaved woman. Six years later Delilah died. Harriet was then raised mostly by her grandmother Molly and remained the property of the white Horniblow family. By 1825, after the death of Harriet's mistress, Margaret Horniblow, Harriet became the property of the Norcom family. In 1828 Harriet's grandmother was also sold as part of the Horniblow estate, but in an unexpected twist she managed to buy her freedom and that of her son, Mark. Harriet, however, remained the property of the Norcom family in Edenton. A year later, Harriet asked Dr. James Norcom if she could be purchased by a black carpenter whom she loved, but Norcom refused and declared that she must be kept as his concubine. To avoid this, Harriet began a sexual relationship with Samuel Treadwell Sawyer, a white man, and in 1829 she gave birth to her son Joseph. Harriet gave birth to her second child, Louisa Matilda, in 1833—the same year the British government abolished slavery.[9]

Harriet probably heard news of British emancipation from the gossip and news that flowed from the many ships that docked in the harbor in Edenton.[10] Living in that port town situated in a small basin off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, Jacobs likely realized that a world existed beyond the parameters of chattel slavery and beyond the grips of Dr. Norcom. Years later, for example, while working among the freedpeople in a refugee camp in Alexandria, Virginia, Harriet celebrated the anniversary of the British emancipation of slavery by holding a fundraising event to commemorate this important turning point.[11] But in 1833, with two children who were slaves, the closest Harriet came to freedom was news that slaves somewhere else were freed. As an enslaved woman, Jacobs lived in constant terror of Dr. Norcom. Throughout *Incidents*, she wrote about the sexual violence and intimidation that enslaved women experienced across the South.

By 1835 Dr. Norcom's sexual advances, combined with Jacobs learning that Norcom had arranged for her children to be sent into chattel slavery, led her to escape. She took refuge in the home of a slaveholding woman and then in the swamps to hide from Norcom and the slave catchers. She eventually made her way to her grandmother's house. The story of how she lived for over seven years in the cramped quarters of her grandmother's attic and managed to avoid being caught by slave catchers forms the plot of *Incidents*. During that time, Sawyer bought the children, and they lived in the same house where Jacobs hid. Since she was a "fugitive slave," she was unable to see Louisa and Joseph—but she often heard them. "Season after season, year after year, I peeped at my children's faces, and heard their sweet voices, with a heart yearning all the while to say, 'Your mother is here.'"[12] When Sawyer purchased Louisa and Joseph, he promised Harriet that one day he would free them.

By 1838 Harriet's brother John had fled to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Two years later, Sawyer kept his promise and sent Louisa to Washington, D.C. A few months later, Louisa was sent to Brooklyn. By 1842 Harriet had escaped from Edenton and miraculously made her way to Philadelphia, and she eventually united with Louisa in Brooklyn. In 1844 Harriet moved her family to Boston and secured employment as a seamstress. For the next few years, the Jacobs family continued to move around. Harriet made two trips to England, and Louisa returned to New York State and pursued her education in Clinton.

From the late 1840s to the early 1850s the family became involved in the abolitionist movement. After returning from sea, John lectured in New York and became a member of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and the New England Anti-Slavery Society. Meanwhile, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which

demanded that northerners capture escaped slaves and return them to southern slaveholders, placed the Jacobs family in jeopardy.[13] Harriet fled farther north to New Bedford, Massachusetts, with plans to move to California. By 1852 John had made his way to Australia. Through her work in the abolitionist movement, Harriet befriended Amy Post, a Rochester abolitionist. By 1853 Jacobs had begun writing her autobiography while living with the Willis family, who remained her main supporters throughout her life. For the next four years, Jacobs worked on her autobiography. By 1859 a Boston publisher had agreed to publish her narrative but then went bankrupt. The following year Jacobs met Lydia Marie Child, who agreed to edit the manuscript and write the introduction. In 1861 Jacobs's autobiography was published under the pseudonym Linda Brent. Due to the fact that her escape from slavery deemed her a fugitive, she could not risk publishing her book under her real name, as the fate of enslaved people remained uncertain.[14] Not until the Civil War finally ended did the federal government pass the Thirteenth Amendment that ended slavery in the United States and gave Harriet and nearly four million slaves their freedom.

Once the Union defeated the Confederacy and slavery ended, it would seem that Jacobs no longer needed to use her pseudonym. Yet for decades, the northern press continued to refer to her as "Linda." At times, her name appeared in print with "Linda" parenthetically noted or in quotations; at other times both names were used interchangeably.[15] During the war years, she signed her name as "Linda" in personal correspondence.[16] Jean Fagan Yellin has suggested that Jacobs used her pseudonym during the postwar years as a way to use her "celebrity" as an author to drum up support for building schools and orphanages for freed children.[17] While this might be the case, this assumes that Jacobs cultivated her so-called celebrity status and that the postwar climate enabled her to be a celebrity. But as Jacobs's opening quotation suggests, she wrote *Incidents* not "to attract attention to myself" but rather to help enslaved women. While she may have seen the necessity to capitalize on this celebrity status to help freedwomen and their children, it is unclear if Jacobs was recognized as a prominent figure at the time and if she cultivated such an image.

What is evident is that Jacobs and Louisa continued to face hostility and danger despite the end of slavery, which may have led her to continue to use her pseudonym. In 1866, for example, she and Louisa boarded a steamship from Savannah, where they were working as reformers and teachers to freedpeople. After the ship set off, Harriet and Louisa were forced off the ship as it was "discovered by some of the passengers that there was colored blood in her veins."

After white passengers complained, the two women were "both put off the boat in a very rough manner, and compelled to remain in that city."[18]

It was not safe for Jacobs and her daughter to travel, especially in the South as the political climate turned violent.[19] By 1866 white southern leaders were fuming as radical northerners took control of the region.[20] Republican control of Congress, in turn, led hundreds of northerners to move south. Some were former abolitionists who came to build schools and to provide basic relief to freedpeople; others came under the banner of the Freedmen's Bureau, the government agency that attempted to rebuild the South. A number of men wanted to take advantage of economic opportunities in the South or to start a new life.

Harriet recognized that a changing political landscape made life dangerous in the Reconstruction South.[21] According to the agent on the steamship, the Jacobses had somehow deceived him by buying first-class tickets and looking "white." That Harriet and Louisa likely felt entitled to buy a ticket only further infuriated the crew and passengers.[22] That the crew had to "remove them in a rough manner" suggests that Harriet and Louisa fought back, either physically or at least verbally protesting their removal.

The story of the Jacobses' travails eventually made its way to New York City, where the *New York Times* reported the incident on August 2. Did Harriet's celebrity status earn her a feature story in a leading northern newspaper? Or did the northern press report on this story based on its fascination with race, the idea that some black people looked "white"? Or did the *Times* pick up the story because it illustrated segregation and how Reconstruction was beginning to dictate new social norms?

All of these issues may be plausible, but even more fundamental questions remain. What did this incident mean for Harriet and Louisa? How does it illustrate the dangers that they confronted after slavery ended? They presumably did not see themselves as celebrities when they were aboard a ship where fellow passengers questioned their appearance. They likely did not feel like celebrities when the steamship's crew interrogated them about their identity. And they certainly did not feel like celebrities when they were unable to get back to New York and were left on an unfamiliar southern shore. Finally, it is hard to define them as celebrities when the work that they were doing in Savannah was laborious, gritty, and rarely celebrated during Reconstruction as valuable work. Many Americans were suspicious of reformers' political missions and intentions, often dismissing them as fanatical.[23]

Harriet and Louisa Jacobs's confrontation with the ship's crew must be contextualized according to their life experiences. Slavery had defined their lives despite the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Slavery provided more

of a backdrop to their experience than did the idea of liberation. The experience aboard the steamship was not the first time Harriet's life resembled that of a fugitive on the run rather than a freedwoman enjoying her liberty. During the Civil War, Jacobs traveled by train from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., in order to help emancipated slaves who had fled from southern plantations come to the nation's capital. In a letter to the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison in which she described her trip, she wrote, "I reached the capital without molestation." As a black woman, she faced being interrogated by white railroad conductors who questioned her presence aboard the train.[24] Further, as a fugitive slave, who had a $100 ransom for returning her to her master, she needed to be careful when she traveled.

Despite no longer being enslaved, she had to carefully navigate the free North even after the Civil War ended. Both the train ride and the incident aboard the ship reveal how Jacobs was often under surveillance. The end of slavery did not ease her anxieties. She continued to feel her life was in danger. And, quite frankly, it was. In the 1880s, almost forty years after her escape from North Carolina, her former master continued to search for her. Jacobs knew this, and she always tried to know where he was. Harriet often perused the names of tourists who checked into city hotels when their names and locations were published in local newspapers. When she moved to Washington, D.C., in the 1880s, "she was no doubt aware that his son James Norcom Jr.—the young master from whom she had escaped—was living in the District."[25]

Thus, Harriet may have continued to use her pen name "Linda Brent" long after the war ended in order to protect her identity. Jacobs's experience in slavery taught her to be cautious, and Washington, D.C., her home after the war, likely did not represent the beacon of liberty but the metaphorical attic of her early captivity. Using her pseudonym may have enabled her to move throughout the city with a bit more ease. Women's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton knew Harriet Jacobs and Louisa, but when Stanton co-edited *History of Woman Suffrage* in 1881, she referred to Jacobs as "Linda Brent," suggesting that Jacobs may have continued to use her pen name as a disguise long after she published *Incidents*.[26]

Although one could argue that Stanton mistakenly referred to Jacobs as "Linda Brent," it seems more likely that Jacobs shielded her identity because she feared "molestation" on northern trains and wanted to hide from her former master. Even beyond the threat of physical danger, perhaps Jacobs felt more comfortable by using her pseudonym. In this way, Jacobs's interaction with Stanton illustrates the "politics of dissemblance," the way many black women refrained from revealing their true identities and preferred to be invisible to the white

world.[27] Furthermore, many black women activists had a tenuous relationship with white suffragists and questioned their objectives. At a women's rights convention, Frances Harper articulated both the dangers that black women faced as well as her frustration with white women's lack of understanding of black women's issues. "You white women speak here of rights, I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel as if every man's hand against me. . . . I tell you that if there is any class of people who needs to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America."[28] Therefore, Jacobs may have used her pen name with Stanton because of her uneasiness with white suffragists. It should also be noted that in 1867 Harriet and Louisa Jacobs terminated their public role in the white women's movement, further illustrating the gap between white women activists and the Jacobses.

Jacobs nevertheless continued to use her pseudonym among international reformers. In a letter to British reformers asking for assistance for orphans in Savannah, she signed her name "Linda Jacobs."[29] She may have employed a hybrid of her name because British readers knew her as the author Linda Brent, not as the reformer Harriet Jacobs. If that was the case, why not simply use "Linda Brent"? Why create a hybrid that might not be recognized by British reformers? In the northern press, reformers circumvented this issue by referring to her by both names. In letters that Jacobs penned to northern readers, editors often added a line that Jacobs was Linda Brent to avoid any confusion.[30] The fact that Harriet signed her name "Linda Jacobs" might not have been a rhetorical device but how Jacobs described herself in the postwar years.

As *Incidents* reveals, Jacobs was a talented wordsmith and a careful writer, so it is unlikely that her use of the pseudonym was accidental. In her autobiography, she carefully manipulated words and often used multiple connotations to avoid articulating the social taboo of sexual intimidation, violence, and rape. She understood the power of names and, as a result, changed all names in *Incidents*. Thus, it seems less likely that the uses of "Linda Jacobs" and "Linda Brent" were mistakes but rather conscious efforts made by a woman who understood how to employ language and to use names to remain safe.

Jacobs may have also continued to use her pseudonym based on her wartime work as a reformer. Jacobs disagreed with the military's policies regarding freedpeople. Her disagreements with the northern military, who allegedly were helping former slaves, likely branded Jacobs as a problem by the Union army and cast doubt among northern reformers who worried that military officials might force them out of the South. Therefore, Jacobs may have used her pseudonym in a deliberate political effort to protect herself. She recognized

that names could help people find her, that names could get her in trouble, and most of all, that names could potentially thwart her political work as a reformer.

Despite the wealth of surviving evidence that has been uncovered about Jacobs's life, there is still much we do not know about her. The evidence only represents a fraction of her life and often deals with specific parts of her experience. She crafted her autobiography with a political objective to abolish slavery, and her correspondence and published reports about her relief work were narrated with an eye toward a political goal. The extant evidence does not reveal her feelings, desires, fears, relationships, and intimacies. Perhaps her continued use of the name Linda Brent was an effort to avoid a public engagement with these sensibilities.

Historians of the last thirty years have turned Jacobs into a heroine, but the surviving records show she neither desired a public persona nor participated in the major political events of the day that could have advanced her prominence. While in Washington, neither Harriet nor Louisa was part of the city's elite "colored society." They did not attend parties hosted by their friend Charlotte Forten Grimké, who was part of the black elite. Additionally, despite the fact that both were literate (Louisa was formally educated), they were not members of the popular Bethel Literary Society, an intellectual hub for many black people in Washington at this time.[31] Jacobs did not participate in elite northern intellectual and cultural life as did Frederick Douglass and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, who lectured about slavery, prophesied about the future, or read poetry to packed houses. Harper knew of Jacobs and clearly read *Incidents*, because in her novel *Iola Leroy* two of the characters are named Harriet and Linda and are connected to North Carolina.[32] Yet in the voluminous collections of the black women's club movement in which Harper was a leading member, Jacobs's and Harper's names do not appear at the same meetings nor are they part of the same organizations.[33]

In her final years, Jacobs remained on the margins of society, hidden from public view. She continued to do reform work, opening boardinghouses for displaced and poor black people. In 1888 Harriet and Louisa Jacobs worked as domestics in Washington, D.C. Louisa sought work as a teacher there, and though a handful of other black women were hired, Louisa could not find a job.[34] While there are many reasons Louisa may not have been hired, perhaps Harriet and Louisa's reform work barred Louisa from gaining a professional position. Meanwhile, Harriet became sick with pneumonia. She contacted her friend and political ally Julia Wilbur and asked to borrow money, but Wilbur "had none for her." At seventy-five years old, Harriet was unwell and penniless.[35]

In 1889 Jacobs returned to Edenton, North Carolina, a place she described

to Wilbur as "forlorn." Jacobs felt "isolated in her old hometown, and missed the news."[36] Louisa stayed with Wilbur for a month but then returned to Washington, D.C. Eventually, Harriet also returned to Washington, after surviving a brutal storm while traveling aboard a boat. She then found work as a housekeeper. In 1893 Harriet and Louisa remained impoverished, and according to Julia Wilbur's diary, they "suffered so much."[37]

The nightmare of slavery continued to haunt them as they faced poverty and ill health. In 1893, according to Louisa's correspondence with Julia Wilbur, Wilbur recorded in her diary that "Louisa talked of their Slave Life & their life since."[38] The rise of lynchings in the 1890s probably terrorized them and forced them to lead anonymous lives. In 1891 some 113 black people were lynched, and throughout the 1890s, that number increased in the South. In 1894 Harriet underwent surgery for breast cancer. Her health continued to decline, and by 1896 she was confined to a wheelchair. The next year, Harriet Jacobs died at the age of eighty-four.

In 1897 Ednah Dow Cheney, a northern reformer and friend of Jacobs, gave a eulogy in her honor in which she explained that Harriet feared "renewed slavery" even after emancipation.[39] Cheney's reference to "renewed slavery" is lost on many who know that however terrible, intimidating, and violent the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were for black people, the civil rights movement was on its way. For women born into slavery who read about black people being lynched throughout the South, the notion of "renewed slavery" may have seemed plausible.

The specter of slavery never faded far from Harriet and Louisa Jacobs's minds. History often posits artificial parameters that fail to capture the ways in which people's lives bleed across temporal frames. Slavery had officially ended, but when Louisa wrote to Julia Wilbur about her enslavement, it returned—first in her mind, then in the shape of words and sentences that Julia read. On January 6, 1884, Harriet, Louisa, and Julia dined together, and the past again interrupted the present.[40] When they finished eating, Julia read from her diary about their time together in Alexandria, Virginia. As she read excerpts, Julia admitted she had forgotten many of the instances. But that night, in a room where a fire warmed her house, the struggles and conflicts they endured returned in the "incidents" that Wilbur read to the women.[41] Historical narratives and tools cannot capture the fear that any of these women felt when they remembered their time together. It cannot tell us what they experienced as they called upon the past, conjuring images that were better off left in a tattered diary that Julia rarely read. The past was terrifying, and the present promised little hope.

While the Jacobses' experiences in slavery, war, and Jim Crow suggest that

they may have "been in the storm so long," that line of thinking posits racism as the sole explanation for their suffering and fails to note the events of their everyday lives. What if Jacobs purposely died in obscurity? Perhaps she wanted to remain anonymous. Clearly, she would not have wanted to suffer from poverty, but maybe that cost seemed negligible compared to being in the spotlight. Perhaps she wanted to remain underground because of her experiences in slavery, war, and Jim Crow.

Jacobs, at the very least, seems to have experienced what historian Nell Irvin Painter has summoned as "soul murder."[42] Painter's gesture to the psychological trauma that enslaved people who experienced sexual abuse endured challenges a narration of the past that neatly fits people's lives into categories created by historians. It also could suggest why Jacobs may have wanted to be forgotten. Despite the fact that Jacobs was literate, wrote an autobiography, penned essays for northern newspapers, and continued to correspond with friends throughout her life, she did not keep an archive of her letters or a diary. Nor did Louisa. The material that has survived is mostly letters from the Jacobses that others preserved. There is little evidence that they wanted to be remembered as historical figures. Jacobs underscores this point in the opening of *Incidents* when she emphasizes that her autobiography was to help the abolitionist cause, not to put her in the limelight. Throughout her life, she continued to eclipse archival accounting, either by referring to herself as "Linda Brent" or by simply remaining outside public life. Louisa followed in her footsteps. She died in 1917, yet she left no record of her life. There is a photograph that could be of her, but even that remains uncertain.[43]

The presumed scholarly logic is that the double-headed hydra of racism and sexism drove Harriet Jacobs into oblivion, initially discrediting her as the author of *Incidents* and then erasing her from the historical record. The likelihood is that Louisa and Harriet Jacobs did not want to be remembered and left virtually no trace of their lives. Their rationale was not because of self-hatred or a disregard for their people; evidence suggests the opposite. They continued to help the poor and dispossessed even when they had nothing, hosting holiday dinners and raising money to support boardinghouses for poor people well into the 1890s. Their rationale seemed more to do with the fact that they were born into slavery and lived on the margins for most of their lives. That trauma, or "soul murder," was the likely cause of their erasure from the historical record. Jacobs spent seven years crawling around an attic to avoid being captured. It seems she remained in hiding for the rest of her life.

Her choice to do so probably results from the period in which she and Louisa lived. From the vantage point of a strict chronology of the past, Harriet and

Louisa lived during slavery but then they were legally emancipated and lived through Reconstruction. Yet they both died during the Jim Crow era, a period of reversals of federal laws, violent lynchings, and strict segregation. If slavery did not murder their souls, it is likely Jim Crow did. Even if they managed to navigate through slavery and Jim Crow, the politics of dissemblance—the effort to refrain from revealing their entire selves—perhaps led them purposely to be forgotten.

Despite the fact that Harriet Jacobs's life remains one of the best-documented lives of any enslaved woman and her children, there are still many questions about her life that the archives cannot answer. The "Harriet Jacobs" who has survived in newspaper clippings, in correspondence, and most of all, in her *Autobiography* is a carefully crafted portrait of her life, a portrait that reveals much truth and insight, but a portrait that cannot capture the motivations, the nuances, and most of all, the full emotional composition of her life. Some of the silences and gaps in the archive might have then resulted from the fact that Jacobs may have wanted to be forgotten. Perhaps her appearance of disclosure was staged, an act of dissemblance—the only opportunity available for a woman who was a fugitive slave, an abolitionist, a reformer, a teacher, a mother, and an author.

NOTES

1. Jean Fagan Yellin, ed., *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, by Harriet Jacobs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1.

2. For a critical analysis of enslaved people as authors, see Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hollis Robbins, *In Search of Hannah Crafts: Critical Essays on the Bondswoman's Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

3. On Yellin's discovery of Harriet Jacobs, see Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), xv–xxi.

4. Yellin, *Incidents*, 1.

5. Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42–64.

6. For more on the federal government's response to the health and well-being of emancipated slaves, see Downs, *Sick from Freedom*.

7. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 163–73. Carol Faulkner smartly identifies the conflicts between northern female reformers and Union officials. See Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

8. Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women: Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," in Darlene Clark Hine, ed., *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1994), 37.

9. Jean Fagan Yellin et al., ed., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), 1:l–lviii.

10. For more on the clandestine communication networks that existed during slavery, see Steven

Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); and Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life in the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

11. Speech of Harriet Jacobs, "Flag presentation at L'Ouverture Hospital, Alexandria, Va.," August 1, 1864, cited in Jean Fagan Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), 2:577.

12. Yellin, *Incidents*, chap. 29, p. 148.

13. While the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 also called for the return of runaway slaves to southern slaveholders, it was gently enforced. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was much more aggressive and fueled the notion of the South as a "Slave Power."

14. Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 1:l–lviii.

15. See, for example, "Harriet Jacobs to William Lloyd Garrison," April 1863, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:399–407; Samuel May Jr., "To the Editor of the National Anti-Slavery Standard," October 30, 1864, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:585–88; "Jacobs (Linda) School, Alexandria, Va.," February 1865, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:613; "Diary of Kate Amberley," April 17, 1868, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:726.

16. "Harriet Jacobs to Mary Rebecca Darby Smith ca.," January 14, 1862, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 1:363.

17. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, xv.

18. "Miss Jacobs Purchased First-Class Tickets," September 1866, quoted in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:670.

19. The year 1866 was marked by race riots in New Orleans. Freedwomen were in particular danger as white southerners often sexually assaulted and violated them. See Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). On violence during this period, see James G. Hollandsworth Jr., *An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of July 30, 1866* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Carole Emberton, "The Limits of Incorporation: Violence, Gun Rights, and Gun Regulation in the Reconstruction South," *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 17, no. 3 (2006): 615–34.

20. Radical Republicans' control of Congress in 1866 disempowered former Confederates whom Johnson had pardoned and whom he had allowed to rejoin the Union without penalty. For more on Reconstruction politics, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

21. Nine months earlier, she had refused to leave Louisa in Savannah and "go in the interior." She explained to the northern society that requested her to go further into the Deep South that she wanted to stay with Louisa until Louisa's school was built. While Harriet framed her decision around the building of the school, her decision to not leave Louisa's side could suggest her awareness of the dangers that her daughter would face as a single, black woman reformer. See "Letter from Harriet Jacobs, December 9, 1865," cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:648.

22. The Jacobses' experience can be seen as a part of larger nineteenth-century dilemma surrounding "social equality," which refers to the ways in which discrimination and segregation existed despite the legal recognition of equality. Kate Masur examines the issue of social equality in more depth. See Kate Masur, *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); and "West Point and the Problem of Equality," paper presented at the 13th Annual Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study

of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition International Conference at Yale University, November 11–12, 2011.

23. On the political nature that women's reform work connoted during this period, see Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

24. Historian Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor is currently at work on an important book about the history of African American travel before the Civil War that will provide more insight into the experiences of black women, like Jacobs, who traveled on trains in the nineteenth century.

25. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 245.

26. Ibid., 261. She is also referred to in Kate Amberley's diary in 1868 as "Linda." See "Diary of Kate Amberley," April 17, 1868, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:726.

27. Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women," 37–47.

28. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "We Are All Bound Up Together," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh Women's Rights Convention* (New York: Robert J. Johnston, 1866).

29. *Anti Slavery Reporter*, March 2, 1868.

30. New England Anti-Slavery Convention, Boston, May 28, 1863, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:493. Also see *The Freedmen's Record*, September 1866, 161.

31. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 236–37.

32. Yellin, *Incidents*, xxix.

33. I discussed this with Jean Yellin when I was a research assistant at the Harriet Jacobs Family Papers. Yellin was unable to place Jacobs and Harper in the same room. Over the years in my examination of the records of the black women's club movement both in the Daniel Murray collection at the Library of Congress and in the *Black Biographical Dictionaries*, 1790–1950, issue 195, volume 2, edited by Randall K. Burkett, Nancy Hall Burkett, and Henry Louis Gates, I was unable to find them at the same meeting or as part of the same organization. Furthermore, Jacobs did not curry the attention or the spotlight that Frederick Douglass coveted or that a growing number of black women writers like Frances Harper, Suzie King Taylor, and Mary Church Terrell achieved at the turn of the twentieth century.

34. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 239.

35. Ibid., 252.

36. Ibid.

37. "Julia Wilbur Diary," April 12, 1893 quoted in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:815.

38. Ibid.

39. "Woman's Journal (Boston, Mass.)," May 1897, quoted in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:843.

40. I am evoking Toni Morrison's notion of re-memory, which she developed in *Beloved* (New York: Plume, 1987).

41. Diary of Julia A. Wilbur, January 6, 1884, cited in Yellin et al., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:771.

42. Painter brilliantly builds on the literature of psychology in order to examine the costs of slavery. See Neil Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in *Southern History across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 15–39.

43. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 269.

Cornelia Phillips Spencer

The Foremost Daughter of North Carolina and the Contradictions of a Nineteenth-Century Public Life

WILLIAM A. LINK

Cornelia Phillips Spencer belongs to a long tradition of conservative women in North Carolina, though few of them articulated their views with the same vigor, enthusiasm, and effectiveness. Today she is perhaps best remembered for her deep-seated beliefs in the inferiority of black people and in their inability to handle civil and political life. Though widely scorned today for her racial invective, she remains an important woman who was able to achieve public stature—an unusual distinction in that era. A leading figure at the University of North Carolina (UNC)—one of the state's most important cultural institutions—she achieved statewide celebrity as a skilled writer who knew how to use words and language effectively. Widowed for most of her adult life, Spencer operated in arenas—politics, journalism, and higher education—that were otherwise largely or entirely male. Mentoring several generations of UNC students, she also advised the state's political leadership, and her influence on powerful men was profound. Though no advocate of equal rights for women, Spencer provides an example of a woman able to accomplish much in a male world.

Admittedly, much of her success in public life was indirect and lay in her ability to communicate with men. She loved the power of the written word, especially correspondence; she was an avid letter writer. "When one has anything to write about," Cornelia once observed, "there is no more care dispelling occupation."[1] One of her biographers described her rare ability to sustain friendships with "the useful and prominent men of North Carolina who . . . had been

CORNELIA PHILLIPS SPENCER

Engraving from the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers (#683),
Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

at the University, both those older and younger than herself." They consulted her frequently, and her "acute mind leaped with theirs to help them define their thought." Spencer's literary ability became her way to reach the "hearts and minds of men."[2]

Spencer was formidable and fearless, with a relentless intelligence. Activist, poet, journalist, and historian, she became an accomplished woman in a patriarchal society by adopting provocative, often controversial views. Asked if she was the smartest woman in North Carolina, Civil War governor Zebulon B. Vance observed: "And smartest man, too."[3] She enthusiastically promoted education, especially at the University of North Carolina, and she also advocated public higher education for women. A promoter of the Lost Cause, she published an early history of the late stages of the Civil War in North Carolina, *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* (1866). Although not a suffragist, Spencer favored expanding women's public roles, drawing on their traditional roles in family and church.

Spencer exhibited a contradictory combination of accomplishment and intelligence along with a rigid traditionalism. Her life was unusual in that it exemplified how a woman could successfully navigate traditionally male corridors of power. But she also agreed with whites' consensus about black people in the post-emancipation South. Like many southern whites, she believed that racial subordination was part of the natural order of things. Black enfranchisement and civil rights seemed, to her, a ghastly mistake. And, like many former Confederates, she bitterly resented northern occupation and Republican rule in postwar North Carolina.

Spencer was born Cornelia Phillips, in Harlem, New York, on March 20, 1825, the daughter of Judith Vermeule and James Phillips. Her mother was descended from Dutch colonists in New Jersey; her father, a minister and teacher born in England, immigrated to the United States in 1818 and married Judith three years later. Cornelia described her mother's family as "religious, serious, thoughtful," her father's as "more worldly and pleasure-loving, clever and good-natured."[4] James ran a successful school in Harlem. In 1826, when Cornelia was a year old, he became professor of mathematics at the University of North Carolina. Chartered in 1789, the university was located at an elevated spot with springs and hickory and oak forests in central Orange County, at a crossroads known as New Hope Chapel Hill. UNC trustees laid a cornerstone for the first building in October 1793, opened the university in 1795, and graduated its first class in 1798.

When the Phillipses arrived about a quarter century later, the village of Chapel Hill, not much bigger than it had been when the university was founded, was covered with what an early historian called a "primeval growth of forest trees,

with only one or two settlements and a few acres of clearing."[5] Fourteen miles south of the county seat in Hillsborough, Chapel Hill lay on a crossroads located on the stagecoach trail between Petersburg, Virginia, and Pittsboro, North Carolina. No railroad ran through the town until the 1880s. Its main street, extending along the northern boundary of the campus, contained a few faculty residences, a small hotel, shops, and a livery stable. The campus consisted of a chapel and three simple red-brick buildings where students lived and were taught, in a small quadrangle that included a belfry and a well. James Phillips joined a university with four faculty and a president, Joseph Caldwell, all of them living in the village. A decade after Phillips arrived, the university counted 8 faculty and 165 students, but during Cornelia's childhood, it expanded significantly. Under the presidency of David Lowery Swain (1836–68), UNC grew to claim the largest student enrollment of any college in the South. By the Civil War, the size of the faculty and student body had nearly tripled.[6]

Though native northerners, the Phillipses accepted southern ways, purchasing two slaves as house servants.[7] They participated in the active church culture in Chapel Hill and raised their children to regard religion as the center of their existence. Cornelia's parents were both Presbyterians, and she was a lifelong member of the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church. Like other UNC Presbyterians, she subscribed to a strong sense of mission; a Calvinist purpose, or calling, and vocation infused her life.[8] A contemporary described Cornelia as "large, strong and handsome," with "an imposing figure and presence." Possessing striking features, she had "large lustrous eyes," a "full broad massive brow," and a "firm, well-cut chin." Most contemporaries were impressed by Spencer's intellect and her ability to cross gender boundaries.[9] Spencer was "easily the foremost daughter" of North Carolina, said a UNC professor, and "the most gifted woman I ever knew." Cornelia was "neither feminine nor masculine," he observed, "but womanly and manly." She was "almost virile."[10]

Cornelia was educated well beyond the expectations of most middle-class southern white women. One of her biographers remembered Cornelia as possessing a "voracious and omnivorous" appetite for books.[11] Enjoying access to her father's personal library of two thousand volumes, along with the libraries of UNC literary societies, she was an avid reader of history, politics, and biography. As a young girl, along with her two brothers, she learned Latin, Greek, and mathematics—all unusual subjects in a young girl's education—under her parents' instruction.[12]

Reflecting an independence of mind, Cornelia married late, at the age of thirty, on June 20, 1855, to James "Magnus" Munroe Spencer, a lawyer and 1853 UNC graduate. In 1859 she gave birth to their only child, Julia, or "June." Magnus

and Cornelia lived in Clinton, Greene County, Alabama, until June 1861, when James died after a long battle with spinal meningitis. Widowed at age thirty-six, Cornelia and her daughter moved back to Chapel Hill for the remainder of the Civil War. The death of her husband was a "great & irreparable loss," Spencer wrote in her diary in September 1861, which she profoundly grieved.[13] "I do not get used to the loss of my husband in the least degree," she commented in February 1862. Her grief remained "intense & bitter," and she lay awake at night to "recall our life together, dwell on his actions & looks & words till I refuse to realize that he is gone forever."[14] She feared that she would never "become *reconciled* to [her] husband's death, never at least in this life."[15]

Until the Civil War's final months, Chapel Hill remained unaffected by military conflict. The arrival of General William T. Sherman's Yankee army, which swept through the Carolina interior in early 1865, changed things completely. In March, Spencer noted long lines of Confederate soldiers passing through town with supply trains and artillery. Chapel Hill residents rushed to the streets to feed them.[16] Following Sherman's defeat of the Confederate army under Joseph Johnston at the Battle of Bentonville in late March 1865, Spencer recorded the "sad spectacle" of retreating Confederates. In her diary Spencer described the latter part of April 1865 as the "most remarkable three weeks in the history of Chapel Hill." Union forces under General Judson Kilpatrick occupied Chapel Hill on April 17, 1865, stripping the surrounding countryside of food and forage. After Johnston surrendered to Sherman in April 1865, Spencer wrote in her diary that "our hopes for the Southern Confederacy died out. . . . What sorrow—what *anguish* for us. . . . I cannot think two consecutive thoughts," she wrote, "I can only feel."[17]

Grief—both for her dead husband and for the Confederacy—converged in a heightened sense of gloom. She suffered after Magnus's death, she recalled twenty years later, and the war "heightened every feeling of despondency & gloom."[18] Yankee occupation seemed, to her, particularly obnoxious. Union troops encamped in her backyard, and they left little behind. She feared that "humiliation, privation, and a life of continued toil" lay in store for North Carolinians, who were doomed to be a "subjugated & ruined people." The social system had dissolved. Spencer related in her diary how, after the Confederacy's collapse, a "profound depression" gripped the state.[19]

Widowhood, grief, and shock at the Confederacy's fall spawned Spencer's new public persona, which emerged during the late 1860s. Her main vehicle of public involvement became the written word. A prolific author of letters, books, magazine articles, and newspaper pieces, Spencer wrote in a direct, biting style.[20] Her views of defeat and southern identity prompted her to publish

her first book, *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* (1866). First serialized during 1865 in *The Watchman*, a New York religious newspaper, the book grew out of her close friendship with UNC president David Lowry Swain. Serving as a longtime mentor, Swain urged her to write a definitive narrative, based on first-person accounts, of Sherman's invasion.[21] Wartime governor Zebulon Vance, whom she knew when he was a UNC student, also encouraged her. Both Swain and Vance wanted a full account of North Carolina's wartime sufferings. Vance was interested in vindicating his governorship—provided, he said, I "don't stick out too plainly."[22] He urged Spencer to "withhold nothing of the truth of the outrages of Sherman's army."[23] Sensitive to their positions as public leaders during the Confederacy, Swain and Vance felt Spencer would enjoy greater freedom to write this history than they would. The "more Miss Corny has to do with the scheme and the less anyone else," Vance wrote Swain, "the better."[24]

Calling for southerners to assert their version of the history of the Civil War, *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* denounced the evils of Yankee invasion. North Carolinians reluctantly seceded, and during the war, Tar Heels were never permitted much influence in the Confederacy. Still, they had become attached to the southern nation. It would be a long time before the war's history could be "soberly and impartially written," Spencer admitted, because the passions it evoked would not "soon slumber." There was "as yet too much to be forgotten—too much to be forgiven."[25] The North, Spencer maintained, wanted to humiliate southern manhood.[26] The treatment of civilians was "wholly uncalled for, wholly unnecessary." Yankee plunder enjoyed Sherman's tacit approval. And the most important result of civilian depredations was to coalesce white southerners.[27] Spencer appealed directly to northern sympathy. Delicate southern women, she wrote, were "now bravely working with their hands for their daily bread; many in old age, and alone in the world, are bereft of all their earthly possessions." Thousands of white families were impoverished.[28]

Cornelia had been fourteen months old when her family had moved to Chapel Hill, and the town served as her lifelong reference point. Along with two brothers, faculty children became her playmates; the campus was her playground but also the center of her universe. A devoted resident, she became a fierce protector of the town's traditions. "Whenever one thinks of Chapel Hill," commented one observer, "one thinks of Mrs. Spencer."[29] Actively involved in university affairs, she was a close friend, adviser, and mentor of university faculty and presidents. Spencer's attachment to Chapel Hill made her a ferocious and effective defender of the university. If anyone attacked the university, she wrote in 1880, "I always feel as if I *must* rush out & reply to 'em."[30] Late in life, four years before her death

in 1908, she wrote that "if spirits ever return to this earth and revisit scenes once dear—mine will hover over Chapel Hill." She always concluded her day, she wrote another time, "with a prayer for the University."[31]

The Civil War left UNC devastated. The senior class of 1860 counted eighty-four students, a quarter of whom died during the war. Seven faculty fought in the war; two survived. When northern forces occupied Chapel Hill in the spring of 1865, only a dozen students still attended.[32] The institution thereafter staggered along. In 1866 the university graduated three students; during the fall of 1867 only about fifty students attended. The institution's endowment had disappeared, while it owed more than $100,000. The loss of student tuition meant unpaid salaries and a dwindling faculty. UNC was under such pressure that in 1868 state treasurer Kemp P. Battle, Charles Phillips (Cornelia's brother and a professor of mathematics), and three others formed a committee seeking a reorganization of the institution.[33]

Meanwhile, Reconstruction affected UNC in a direct way. The school had lost some support among the state's white population in April 1865 when President Swain's daughter, Ella, fell in love with and married General Smith D. Atkins, who commanded the Union brigade occupying Chapel Hill. Spencer later asserted that the marriage was a "principal agent in alienating public affection and confidence from our University."[34] William W. Holden, elected Republican governor in 1868, was not a UNC graduate, nor was he an advocate for the university. Believing the institution to be elitist and pro-Confederate, Holden wanted to establish a "people's college" at Chapel Hill.[35] Fearing Republican control, Spencer described Holden's election as governor as a "terribly bitter thing for all respectable people in the State."[36]

Under a new constitution approved by voters in March 1868, the state board of education appointed UNC trustees. The new Republican regime fired the remaining faculty and administration, closed the university in the summer of 1868, and appointed Republican Solomon Pool as the new president. An outraged Spencer watched as a contingent of black troops arrived on campus and padlocked its doors. That summer, longtime UNC president David Lowry Swain died after a horseback riding accident. "With him died the university," Spencer later wrote, and "with the university, perished the prosperity of the town."[37] "All is at an end," Spencer lamented in her diary.[38]

Although the university became entangled in the bitter and racially polarized politics of Reconstruction North Carolina, the Republican takeover of UNC was not as dire as Spencer and later historians suggested. Even as dogged an opponent of Republican rule as Kemp Battle later conceded that Pool was a "man of decided talent."[39] An 1853 UNC graduate, Pool and his Republican sup-

porters favored remaking UNC into an institution open to all social classes. The antebellum university primarily served the planter class; Pool wanted to democratize the institution.[40] But Cornelia succeeded in altering the terms of the debate by maligning the intentions of the new UNC administration. She wildly slandered Pool and his Republican faculty. She led a fight against what she called the "bogus president, and faculty men unfit for their office and unworthy of public confidence." Spencer charged that the new UNC leaders were ill suited as educators and that the campus, as a result, had fallen into the "hands of men who will not, cannot do what they promise to do." Spencer's campaign of vituperation succeeded. So strong was public opinion about the reconstituted UNC that when the campus reopened on January 3, 1869, no students attended. The first commencement attracted a handful of people, while the second, according to Spencer, "was a greater failure than the first."[41]

To some extent, Spencer fought the Pool administration because she enjoyed economic and cultural independence as a self-sufficient widow, something that was unusual for women in post–Civil War North Carolina. As a Chapel Hill widow, Spencer lived modestly on her mother's small income, along with her earnings as a teacher of young Chapel Hill females. Spencer also supported herself by writing. In addition to *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina*, she also wrote pieces for *The Watchman* and other publications. In 1870 the *North Carolina Presbyterian* hired her to produce weekly columns, at an annual salary of $400. For the next six years, her "Young Ladies Column" achieved wide readership. Although appearing in a denominational newspaper, it was reprinted in newspapers across the state.

As an effective polemicist, she was insulated from the push and pull of partisan politics. Because of her status as Chapel Hill matron and UNC advocate, moreover, she spoke authoritatively. It surprised few people that she took the lead in the battle with the Pool administration, but without question Spencer had appointed herself to the task. With a boycott of UNC in place and the institution paralyzed, Spencer waged a long, bitter, and racially charged war with the Pool administration.[42] The university was "haunted," and "strong and ineffaceable memories rush unbidden." The village of Chapel Hill had become the "Deserted Village of the South," with many of the "best families in the place" fleeing, business at a "stand-still," and houses "standing untenanted and desolate."[43]

Adopting the same strategy that opponents of Recontruction used everywhere in the postwar South, Spencer racialized the struggle for control of UNC. With a large African American constituency, Republicans seemed to threaten not only black freedom but black control and domination. Education was a flashpoint, and some North Carolina whites even fantasized that Republicans

intended to integrate the university, though these fears had no basis.[44] Mostly, the use of the race issue became a way to rally public opinion against Republican control of UNC, and Spencer frequently repeated racial themes of white solidarity and the dangers of black rule. Emancipation fostered uncertainty among both whites and blacks, and Spencer, like many others, denounced freedom as excess. Ex-slaves, she wrote a friend in 1866, had "always been an awful drag upon the prosperity and development of the South, & because I love the white man better than I do the black, I am glad they are free."[45] Spencer avidly believed that civil and political rights for black men were a mistake. "All men created *free and equal*!" she declared in 1875. "Never was there a greater misstatement."[46]

Spencer, out of political convenience as well as personal conviction, drew on whites' racial fears in her fight against the Pool administration. Much of Spencer's anti-Reconstruction message was highly charged with an explicitly racial message. Denouncing the "ex-negro teachers and scalawags" running university affairs, she declared that "negro and white soldiery, and carpet bag and scalawag faculty rule" were ruining the university. She claimed that "gangs of negroes" occupied Old South Building, the main campus building, "rioting and shouting—drinking."[47] On another occasion, Spencer complained about "wanton young colored girls" infesting the streets of Chapel Hill and contributing to a general moral decline.[48]

Spencer's anti-Reconstruction message was communicated to the public by means of newspapers. From April to July 1869 Spencer published a series of articles in the anti-Reconstruction *Raleigh Sentinel* called "Pen and Ink Sketches," which provided "poisoned arrows for the present incomparable incapables."[49] She attacked President Pool as an "arrogant prig, without two clear ideas in his brains beyond his own selfish aggrandizement and his own two-penny schemes." Thereafter, Spencer continued to publish attacks in the partisan press. In 1872 she charged that UNC had fallen into disrepair under Pool's leadership. She wrote in the *Sentinel* about how she found the door of the Philanthropic Society library building broken open, its contents in "every stage of neglect and dilapidation." Pool responded forcefully in a letter to the *Weekly Era*, a Republican newspaper, charging that Spencer's assertions should be "taken with many grains of allowance." In language no doubt intended to be insulting, he further suggested that Spencer had exceeded her proper place as a woman. If she wanted to emulate woman suffragists and free spirits such as Victoria Woodhull, Pool warned, "she must expect to share Mrs. Woodhull's fame."[50]

Spencer hoped that the Conservative political victory in August 1870—which led to the ouster of the Republicans in the legislature and the impeachment and removal of Holden in March 1871—would end Republican control of the uni-

versity. Soon after the election, she greeted the results. "I want this crew turned out," she said.[51] But matters proceeded slowly, as the university still needed financial support to reopen. In 1874, three years after capturing the legislature, the Conservatives changed the method of electing UNC trustees. The new board then appointed a committee to examine the state of affairs in Chapel Hill. The committee found campus buildings a wreck and university finances in disarray. Legislation enacted in February 1875 authorized a financial reorganization that finally permitted UNC's reopening.

Hearing the good news, Spencer—in one of the better-known acts of her life—climbed to the belfry of South Building and rang the university bell, announcing UNC's rebirth. The "storm and stress" of the battle has passed, she later wrote, "leaving the sky clear and the birds singing again." Even a quarter century later, in 1900, she wrote that her "disapproval" and "*contempt*" survived for Republicans. About Solomon Pool she wrote: "What a miserable story [was] his so-called Presidency of the University of North Carolina."[52]

In her publications, Spencer fully subscribed to the Lost Cause ideology, and much of her writing focused on memorializing the southern past and on shaping the historical memory about the meaning of the Civil War. Like other Lost Cause writers, Spencer romanticized slavery, portrayed the Confederacy as an honorable experiment, and depicted Reconstruction as a terrible mistake. The roots of the Lost Cause lay in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, when southern white women, like Spencer, joined in burying and honoring dead Confederates. In April 1866 Spencer participated in the burial of two brothers, Junius and Lewis Battle, when their bodies were returned to Chapel Hill. She described the event as a "most touching sight."[53] The purpose of honoring fallen southern soldiers, Spencer wrote in 1871, was to "perpetuate the memories of our dead"—not the "hatreds engendered in that direful struggle" or the "bitterness of those dark days of bereavement and defeat." Southern women honored the memory of these brave men in order to provide a "most invaluable lesson we can teach our children." Southern soldiers, she said, "marched away side by side, the poor man's son and the rich man's" and followed noble values of devotion, duty, and patriotism to North Carolina.[54]

Later, as a North Carolina historian, Spencer promoted the view that Reconstruction had brought a "tragic era" to the state by mistakenly empowering black men with the franchise. She repeated the common fiction that northern "carpetbaggers" had invaded the state in search of plunder. These northern plunderers, she wrote in 1889, poured into the South, interfering in local affairs. As predatory interlopers, they sought the support of African Americans and unscrupulous whites. Northern carpetbaggers, Spencer charged, exerted a harmful effect

because they misled freedmen that "they alone were their friends," while they "filled their hearts with distrust and suspicion" and sponsored them "into all the chicanery and corruptions of faction."[55]

Spencer, as her extensive career suggests, involved herself in public issues to a degree unusual for a woman in the nineteenth-century South. However, she was no advocate of women's equality—too many of her ideas about women were traditionally Victorian, accepting prevailing notions of patriarchy. Divine law had determined women's role, she believed. "I do not think any woman can read her Bible and not see that after the fall," she wrote in 1870, "the place assigned her sex was a subordinate one." Legislation and public policy could not alter things. Women should acquiesce and accept male domination. Men might be brutes and women their slaves, but to any woman, men "must still be her head." Women were obliged to be womanly, avoiding "all such work as would unsex her, and take her out of woman's plane." Women's role did not include politics, oratory, government, the law—all activities which unsettled "the equilibrium of the sexes" and created "unwomanly relations" with men.[56]

Nonetheless, Spencer believed in the enhanced role and status of women within limited bounds. Some women did not marry, she asserted, and some—like Cornelia—became widows. Such unattached women must, she said, demonstrate social usefulness. Single, unmarried women deserved respect and affection. What an "unspeakable treasure," she declared, were middle-aged women who selflessly accepted celibacy as their portion, making their homes in other people's houses.[57] Inside the institution of marriage, she urged greater equality for women. The best children, she once observed, came from families "where the union was equal and suitable."[58] Marriage, she wrote in 1873, served as the "most irreparable of all engagements that a woman could take." Too often, however, marriages were hastily made.[59]

Spencer's advice to women stressed a mixture of traditionalism and activism, and in this sense there was a fundamental contradiction in her beliefs about women's role in public life. Unwilling or unable to recognize fully the changing landscape of women's roles, she did not admit that her political actions and public writings paved the way, eventually, for more women to enter into new careers and engage in public life. Spencer confessed a "great confusion of mind" about women's roles. Her ambivalence perhaps mirrored a more general confusion prevailing in the late nineteenth-century South on southern white women's roles, which were changing so rapidly that what women were actually doing often did not match ideas about white women's proper place. No matter what one believed, she wrote, some things remained inevitable: women would marry. "We all know the world must go on." At the same time, however, few

parents gauged their daughters' abilities in the same way that they measured those of their sons. Further, did parents "lay any plans for the girls of a family any further than that they shall all be married if possible"?[60]

Spencer placed a premium on women's role in education. Possessing authority over child nurture, she wrote, women were natural teachers and exerted special preeminence in schooling. A woman taught "insensibly every day of her life, whether . . . in a school-room or not." This meant, too, that women enjoyed greater access to education and learning by having the ability to "acquire such an education as the culture of the day demands." Set against the "natural" tendency of women to educate was the reality that female education remained limited. "If the State educates its boys," she wrote, "I am for having it educate its girls also. Why not?" Women should aspire to become astronomers, physicians, poets, philosopher, historians, mathematicians, inventors, architects, and novelists. In none of these activities would women "disturb the harmony of the spheres or the ever-lasting fitness of things."[61]

Not surprisingly, Cornelia Spencer argued for publicly supported women's higher education. In 1877 she persuaded UNC authorities to permit women to attend lectures on campus during regular sessions. She, her daughter, and her niece became the first females to attend an auditorium lecture, though they were required to sit in rear seats. Spencer conducted a letter-writing campaign around the state to promote women's education, and partly because of her influence, in 1877 UNC offered a summer normal school that permitted women to attend classes for the first time in the university's history.[62] But rather than coeducation, considered a radical idea in Gilded Age North Carolina, she favored separate women's higher education. "Co-education will never do in these latitudes," she wrote, but the state should "make some provision for the girls." Prior to the establishment of the State Normal and Industrial School in 1891 in Greensboro, the state did little for women's higher education. "When I think of what mere crumbs they have to pick up," Spencer wrote, "I get angry."[63]

Spencer also advanced a notion of mutuality among white women, a notion that she practiced actively in the enclosed world of Chapel Hill. "If women do not stand by each other," she wrote in 1876, "they will find they cannot stand at all in this new century." Women needed each other, she asserted. They needed the "sympathy, encouragement, approbation and countenance of their own sex, without which no woman can be pronounced a success in life." Facing "unpleasant hostilities" and a "good deal of oppression in their struggle for work" from men opposing their accomplishments, women could not afford not to have this form of feminine mutuality. "Where two or three gained a foothold, they turned

to help others," she argued. Women acting "hand in hand" succeeded—"and so they will go on succeeding. . . . Helping each other they are bound to succeed."[64]

In September 1880 Chapel Hill residents watched as construction workers labored to build the first railroad line into town. The workers were black prisoners, part of the state's convict lease labor system that exploited African Americans. Along with other women from town, Spencer organized an effort to feed the black convicts. When other residents objected to treating the workers too well, Spencer conducted a campaign that quickly overcame the opposition. She organized a wagonload of food—chicken, beef, ham, potatoes, biscuits, pickles, pies, custard, turnovers, cake, and fruit—donated by Chapel Hillians. The local postmaster, Andrew Mickle, supplied two bushels of apples. Spencer walked two miles to the event, presiding over a sumptuous meal.[65]

Other incidents suggest that Spencer believed herself personally attached to black people. A year after the end of the Civil War, Chapel Hill African Americans celebrated July 4th with a parade through town. Spencer helped the participants prepare a banner, which she designed in pink and white cambric. On one side, the banner read, in Spencer's words, "Respect for former owners." The reverse side said: "Our hope is in God." A group of a thousand ex-slaves marched and then gathered at the post office where they read the Declaration of Independence. They then walked to the village outskirts, ate dinner, and according to Spencer, exhibited "a good temper and good dispositions." "Poor things!" her diary recorded. She described the event as "a right affecting sight."[66]

Spencer believed that whites should practice Christian kindness in their treatment of African Americans. The "first and prime requisite," she declared in the *North Carolina Presbyterian*, was kindness. Black people, she believed, were "humble, simple-hearted, and civil," and they deserved sympathy in their efforts to "elevate themselves in the scale of humanity." But Spencer also strongly opposed civil and political rights for ex-slaves, those "regions for which . . . [they were] totally unprepared."[67] According to the way many former slaveholders saw things, black people were contented but naturally lazy. Their relationships with masters had been harmonious, this view continued, but emancipation had disrupted racial peace. Chapel Hill was filled with "trifling negroes who now swarm on the sidewalks & sit in the sun," she complained in May 1875.[68] A year later, she denounced the Republican Party—an alliance of native-born whites, northerners, and African Americans—as "demagogues and negroes" whom "our fathers would have disdained to set with the dogs of their flock." She was appalled by black officeholders, calling it an outrage to "commit the

entire administration of the law in their community into the hands of negroes, and negroes *only*."[69] Spencer readily accepted racial stereotypes. In May 1879, when the Chapel Hill town government attempted to require the local population to fence their hogs, the black population opposed the measure. "Nothing pleases your average negro more," Spencer declared, "than a good fat hog or two lying in the sun on the sidewalk, or taking a comfortable wallow in a convenient mud-hole."[70]

Spencer's sympathy for black people manifested itself only in terms of white supremacy. The future relationship between whites and blacks, she wrote in 1870, depended on whether African Americans could accept the new racial order. Political equality prevented them from receiving the "kindness and sympathy and good will of their white neighbors which they so much need, and so freely invoke, and so freely receive." Under the "unmitigated evil of slavery," black people lacked "decent principles and a certain amount of Christian teaching." The basis of true charity, despite the flawed nature of slavery, depended on former masters. Encouraging mutual good feeling meant accepting the superiority of whites.[71]

Spencer suggested a reciprocity that crossed racial lines. She cited an example in Chapel Hill. Walking with an ex-governor of the state, she encountered a black couple on a narrow walkway, "dressed in all their Sunday finery." As a mark of respect, whites expected blacks to give way in public spaces. Spencer's derisive description of "Sunday finery" suggested a violation of racial etiquette. But in this instance Spencer's white male friend stepped out of the way and allowed the black woman to pass. Once the black couple recognized the behavior of Spencer's white friend, their demeanor "changed into an expression of deep humility." The black woman stepped forward with a "low reverence, and the man slid half way down the embankment to show his appreciation." Spencer asserted that if black people encountered "such high breeding" from whites, "we should bear very little of their insolence."[72]

Spencer's mixture of paternalism and white supremacy meant that she strongly opposed political and civil equality for African Americans. When Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which guaranteed equal public accommodations for blacks and whites, Spencer objected in a column published in the *North Carolina Presbyterian*. The act placed the races in a position of "social equality," she warned, and would "obliterate distinctions of color and race." She could not, she said, "write of it . . . without a shudder." The Civil Rights Act, she predicted, would bring "harm to the poor colored people, and will shut them out from the kindness and sympathy and good will of their white neighbors."

The end of the "sympathy, and kindness, and protection shown them by the white population of the South at the present time, will be a frightful loss to them," she predicted.[73]

Following the reopening of UNC in the fall of 1875, Spencer lived in Chapel Hill for nearly twenty more years, remaining a dominant force in the town and university. She vigorously resisted most attempts to change the town. In 1881, for example, she battled with town commissioners when they cut down too many of the elm trees that lined Franklin Street. After Professor George T. Winston installed a hydraulic pump to convey water to his house, she objected and sent him a poem of protest. At the same time, Spencer promoted the history of the university and in 1880 published a series of historical reminiscences published in the *University Magazine*.

She remained a prolific letter writer, maintaining an ample correspondence. In Chapel Hill, for six months in 1879 she briefly edited a local publication, the *Weekly Ledger*. She continued as UNC's loudest promoter and often wrote songs adopted by university glee club members. In the early 1880s she began to collect and gather information about UNC alumni and helped to compile a roster of all of the university's graduates. As she had in the past, Spencer worked effectively with the men who ran UNC. The new UNC president, Kemp P. Battle, who served from 1876 to 1891, was a close confidant, while she also mentored another generation of UNC students and future leaders such as Charles D. McIver, Charles B. Aycock, Edwin A. Alderman, and James Y. Joyner. Alderman, who later became president of UNC and then of the University of Virginia, wrote that there was "no better place" than UNC in the late 1870s "for the making of leaders in the world." These UNC graduates, who became progressive-era leaders in North Carolina, drew their inspiration from Spencer.[74]

A new generation of men, many of them UNC graduates, came to power as Spencer grew older. Like Spencer, these men regarded UNC as the springboard for social service, and their vision of reform derived at least partially from Spencer's. Like her, however, their social vision was rooted in white supremacy. Charles B. Aycock, elected governor in 1900, announced a program of "universal education"—but only for white people—and he oversaw the institution of suffrage restriction in 1900 that nearly eliminated African American participation in politics. McIver, founder and president of the State Normal, became one of the South's leading advocates of educational reform. He saw the education of white women as instrumental to larger changes. "Educate a man and you educate an individual," McIver often told audiences during speaking tours.

"Educate a woman and you educate a family." When McIver built a large, new dormitory at State Normal in 1904, he named it in honor of Spencer.

After the death of her mother in February 1881, Cornelia Spencer sold her Chapel Hill home and furnishings and moved to Washington, D.C., where she lived with her brother Samuel for two years. She returned to Chapel Hill in late 1882, renting a room from her friend Selina Thompson and her four daughters (all of whom had been Spencer's pupils). Cornelia had long been partially deaf, a condition that worsened with time. By the late 1880s Spencer more or less retired as a public figure. She moved into Seven Gables, the Franklin Street home of her daughter, June, and son-in-law, James Lee Love, a UNC professor of mathematics. In 1889 she published *First Steps in North Carolina History*, designed for young readers to illustrate that the state was "worthy of high honor" in its willingness to exhibit "resistance to oppression," the "first and freest to shed her blood, and the last to furl her flag."[75] The book received less than favorable reviews, and even her biographer described it as "not one of Cornelia's best productions" and as lacking the "warmth and pungency" of most of her writings.[76]

In 1894 Spencer moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to live with June and James, who had taken a faculty position at Harvard. She never returned to Chapel Hill. A year after she left, UNC, celebrating its centennial, awarded her an honorary degree—the first time that it had done so for a woman. On March 11, 1908, she died in Cambridge. Spencer's life made her one of the most remarkable women in nineteenth-century North Carolina. Her best writing came in the scores of letters she sent to people across the state and nation. There were few people more devoted to the cause of the University of North Carolina than she. But she also harbored the prejudices of her time, and her views on society and politics were characterized by tension and contradiction. She actively promoted the cause of women of her class and race, and she carved out a life that made it possible for her to interact with men on terms of relative equality. Yet she remained a strong opponent of suffrage and political and legal equality for women. Similarly, she opposed black political and civil rights during Reconstruction and waged a long battle against the Republican party. But she also favored a paternalistic approach to race that scorned racial violence and adopted civility and Christian kindness—within a structure of white supremacy—as a means for racial coexistence.

In 1926 her first biographer, Hope Summerell Chamberlain, described Spencer as "not a maddeningly perfect person." She was often "wrong-headed, interestingly opinionated" and prone, in her deafness, "to get hold of a false impression and ride it far and hard." Spencer was often unyielding in her tra-

ditionalism and "often fiercely partisan." At the same time, she also possessed acute intelligence, eloquence, and personal charm. "All sorts and conditions of people came to her for sympathy," trusting Spencer, and expressed their "innermost thoughts" to her. "She loved folks," concluded Chamberlain, "and she loved every little trait which made them genuine and individual."[77]

NOTES

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4. Phillips Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell: The Story of Cornelia Phillips Spencer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 10.

5. Kemp P. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina: From Its Beginning to the Death of President Swain, 1789–1868*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1907), 1:35.

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7. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 30.

8. "Presbyterian," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, September 27, 1871, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 562–63.

9. Mrs. George T. Winston, "Cornelia Phillips Spencer," undated memorial, Spencer Papers, folder 96.

10. George T. Winston, "Recollections of Mrs. Spencer," undated memorial, Spencer Papers, folder 96.

11. "Of Books," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, December 17, 1873, cited in Wilson, ed., *Selected Papers*, 465.

12. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 30–31.

13. Spencer Journal, September 29–30, 1861, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

14. Spencer Journal, February 24, 1862, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

15. Spencer Diary, January 7, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

16. Spencer Journal, March 20, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

17. Spencer Journal, April 17, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

18. Notes in Spencer Diary, 1886, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

19. Spencer Journal, April 30, May 4, 7, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 158.

20. Spencer to Vance, November 11, 1865, typed copy, Spencer Papers, folder 148.

21. Spencer to Vance, October 30, 1865, typed copy, Spencer Papers, folder 148.

22. "Half the world learned to regard Charles I as a sainted martyr from [David] Humes' 'History of England,' whereas his 'vindication of Charles I' would have been set down as the zeal of a partisan" (Vance to Spencer, November 15, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 2).

23. Inscoe, "The War's End," 131; Vance to Spencer, October 14, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 140.

24. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 103. See Vance to Spencer, November 1, 1865, Spencer Papers, folder 2.

25. Cornelia Phillips Spencer, *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* (New York: Watchman Publishing, 1866), 13–15.

26. Quoted in Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861–1937* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 51.

27. Spencer, *The Last Ninety Days*, 50–51, 177.

28. Ibid., 71–72.

29. "Farewell to an Old Friend," undated clipping, Spencer Papers, folder 95.

30. Spencer to her daughter, December 22, 1880, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 707.

31. Annette C. Wright, "'The Grown-up Daughter': The Case of Cornelia Phillips Spencer," *North Carolina Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (1997): 262–63.

32. "During the War," "Pen and Ink Sketches," no. 13, typescript, Spencer Papers, folder 121.

33. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, 2:1.

34. "During the War," "Pen and Ink Sketches," no. 13, typescript, Spencer Papers, folder 121.

35. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 148–50.

36. Spencer Diary, spring 1868, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 604.

37. "Old Times in Chapel Hill, No. IX, Governor Swain," *University Magazine*, May 1888, Spencer Papers, folder 120; Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 104; Wright, "The Grown-up Daughter," 273.

38. William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 73.

39. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, 2:35.

40. Ibid, 2:31.

41. "Pool's Second Commencement a Greater Failure than the First," June 13, 1870, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 645.

42. "Chapel Hill," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 12, 1873, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 666.

43. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, 2:29–30; "Under the Poplar," November 26, 1868, in *Raleigh Sentinel*, December 1, 1868, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 609–11.

44. According to anti-Reconstruction politician John W. Graham, the constitution of 1868 sought "to allow the admission of negroes to the Schools and University." Pool himself believed that these fears accounted for much of the opposition to his administration. See Robert D. Miller, "Of Freedom and Freedmen: Racial Attitudes of White Elites in North Carolina during Reconstruction, 1865–1877" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1976).

45. Spencer to Eliza North, March 10, 1866, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 111.

46. *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 26, 1875, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 128.

47. Wright, "The Grown-up Daughter," 274; Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 152.

48. Spencer to L., June 8, 1875, typed copy, Spencer Papers, folder 151.

49. Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 120; Spencer to Mrs. Charles Phillips, April 14, 1869, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 617.

50. Pool, "C.P.S. and the Phi Library," July 16, 1873, typescript, Spencer Papers, folder 122. Pool's letter caused an uproar. The *Daily Journal* called it "a letter that places him beneath even the lowest of brutes." *Daily Journal*, August 2, 1873; Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 88; "The Phi Library," *Raleigh Sentinel*, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 668–70.

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52. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 223.

53. Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 82.

54. "The Tenth of May," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, May 24, 1871, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 32–33.

55. Spencer, *First Steps in North Carolina History* (Raleigh: Alfred Williams and Co., 1889), 233.

56. "Forbidden Fruit," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 18, 1870.

57. "Old Maids," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, April 1884, clipping in Spencer Papers, folder 99.

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60. *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 2, 1870, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 215.

61. "Forbidden Fruit," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 18, 1870.

62. Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 163.

63. Ibid., 161.

64. "Work for Women, no. 2," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, September 20, 1876, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 197.

65. Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 3–5.

66. Ibid., 85.

67. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 269; "Kindness to the Negro," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, August 31, 1879, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 117–18.

68. Spencer to June Spencer, May 28, 1875, Spencer Papers, folder 151.

69. "Chapel Hill—the Standard," 1869, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 634.

70. Editorial, *Weekly Ledger*, May 10, 1879, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 205–6.

71. "The Freedman, and How to Treat Him," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, August 24, 1870, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 115–16.

72. "The Freedman, and How to Treat Him," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, August 24, 1870, cited in Wilson, *Selected Papers*, 115–16.

73. "Free and Equal," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 26, 1875.

74. Alderman, "Charles D. McIver of North Carolina," *Sewanee Review* 15 (Jan. 1907): 101.

75. Spencer, *First Steps in North Carolina History*, iv.

76. Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell*, 201.

77. Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 230.

Alice Morgan Person

"My life has been out of the ordinary run of woman's life"

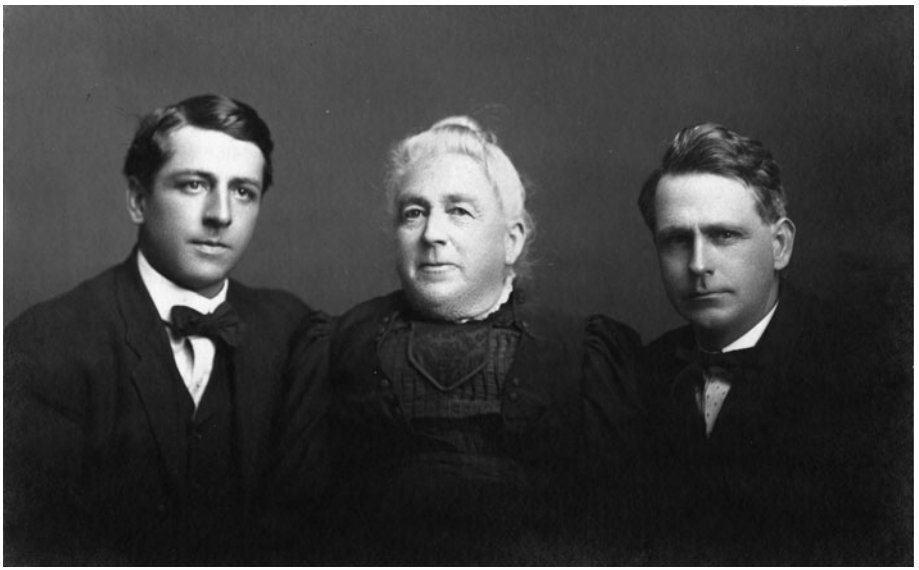
ANGELA ROBBINS

On January 31, 1884, Alice Morgan Person stepped off the train in Charlotte and into a new phase of her life and career. Person's family had been among the state's slaveholders, and their losses after the Civil War, combined with her husband Joseph's debilitating stroke, led Alice to assume an unexpected duty to her family. For several years, she had been operating a small patent medicine business she founded out of her rural Franklin County home. Success encouraged her to expand. Leaving her family behind, she took on a business partner for the necessary capital and relocated to the state's fastest-growing city. That October, recently widowed and her Charlotte partnership having already failed, she set up a booth at the North Carolina State Exposition in Raleigh, capitalizing on the sizeable crowds drawn to its agricultural and industrial exhibitions in order to sell what she called Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy. While there, she found inspiration to create a one-woman medicine show built upon her piano-playing talent that would carry her farther from home but reward her with additional income and fame. In the meantime, she relocated her family to a more modest house and resigned herself to the fact that the Person farm, which she had been struggling to maintain, would be sold at public auction. With determination, industry, and almost constant traveling, she built a profitable business through which she supported her family. As to her decision to take on the role of breadwinner over the domesticity demanded of a woman of her status, "somebody had to work," Person acknowledged resolutely, "and the place was mine."[1]

Few North Carolina businesswomen who were Alice Person's contempo-

raries shared her family's pre–Civil War status or achieved the reputation and wealth she did, but elements of her story resonated for many. As a result of the severe economic dislocation after the Civil War, thousands of white women from various socioeconomic backgrounds now had to work to support themselves and their families in the few acceptable jobs open to them. For educated women like Person, teaching was often the clear choice. Even more women created opportunities for themselves in larger cities like Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, Winston, and Greensboro by turning their homes or rental properties into boardinghouses and engaging in dressmaking, millinery, and shopkeeping. White women usually ran these small business ventures, which typically required little initial investment, provided minimal remuneration, and did no damage to their respectability because the work did not appear to get in the way of their domestic duties. Businesswomen managed their various responsibilities by hiring other white women as well as black women (who rarely had the same opportunities) to work for them as laundresses and domestic servants, chambermaids, and seamstresses. By the early twentieth century, the female labor force had changed dramatically. The new economy relied on the cheap labor of lower-class women and their children in textile mills and tobacco factories, while middle-class women increasingly attended colleges and pursued careers in teaching and nursing or filled clerical and sales positions. Women's businesses that had an impact in urban business districts in the late nineteenth century gradually disappeared.[2]

Not only did Alice Person's business place her outside the realm of women's customary work, but she also broke through gender conventions. Her workaday routine was to travel, often and alone, spending extended periods of time away from home. Hers was, in the estimation of many—particularly medical professionals—not a respectable occupation for anyone, much less a woman. Yet she lived during the height of the popularity of patent medicines, and Person imagined she might earn a million dollars with her remedy. Considering the paltry income earned through traditional women's work, this demonstrates her healthy dose of ambition—a decidedly "unwomanly" trait—and helps to explain her unorthodox choice. Reflecting on the challenges facing a woman who stepped out of her domestic sphere and into the public world of business, Person declared, "it was something new then to see a woman, and a Southern woman at that, doing man's work." The transition was not seamless, and even as Person cast off traditional gender roles, she remained invested in them, presenting herself as a fighter as well as a lady, self-reliant but also dependent on men. Person resolved these contradictions by emphasizing her work as another



ALICE MORGAN PERSON AND SONS

Alice Morgan Person Collection (#1116), Special Collections Department,
J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C.

example of duty to her family, defending her right and that of all women to take on the role of breadwinner.[3]

"My life has been out of the ordinary run of woman's life," Alice Morgan Person expressed in the opening of her personal account of her life and career. Using war imagery to capture both the devastating impact of the Civil War on her life and her struggle against gender conventions, the embattled Alice continued: "Circumstances have forced me to the front, where I have met both Knights and Cowards. Circumstances have compelled me to stand my ground and fight the great Fight single-handed and alone." She presented her youthful self as the archetypal southern belle. She had been born into a comfortable Petersburg, Virginia, family in 1840, but money woes soon plagued her parents, Samuel and Esther Morgan. These conditions made Alice's favorable marriage an important priority. Seventeen-year-old Alice married forty-three-year-old Joseph Arrington Person, a prosperous farmer from rural Granville County, North Carolina, in 1857. On the eve of the Civil War, the couple held real estate valued at $5,825, as well as $16,800 in personal property, including sixteen slaves. Alice recounted a happy married life, free from worry until war broke out and her husband organized a group of volunteers to serve in the Confederate army. Forty-eight-year-old Joe Person had perhaps been a bit too eager to fight, claiming at enlistment he was a healthy forty-year-old. When Joe returned home within a month due to an honorable medical discharge, Alice believed her life would return to normal. At war's end, those hopes were dashed when her husband suffered a paralyzing stroke and the Confederacy surrendered. Alice watched Joe regain the ability to walk but realized he would never again operate a farm, especially without the slave labor upon which they had once relied.[4]

Alice lamented, "We were left, as were so many Southerners, with only a tract of land, which my husband was powerless to look after, and a family of little children depending upon us." Assessing their losses, the beleaguered mother named the welfare of her nine children as her chief concern. Eldest daughters Alice Gibson, born in 1859, and Esther, born in 1861, shared responsibility for their younger siblings so that their mother could concentrate on her business. Son Wiley had arrived in 1862, and would go on to practice law in Louisburg, not far from his childhood home. Daughter Josephine, who suffered from health issues her whole life, was born in 1864. Two years later, son Robert Lee was born. In 1871 the Persons welcomed son Rufus, who would carry on the business his mother built. Between 1873 and 1878, sons Henry, Levin, and the couple's youngest child, William, were born. Rather than allow herself and her daughters to become "household drudges" or her sons to work as field laborers,

Alice determined that she would find a way to provide her big family with "the advantages we had always enjoyed." For a family of former slaveholders, this included a college education for sons Wiley and William, musical training for their daughters, and servants for their household.[5]

As the family faced the prospect of losing their home and property, a near tragedy determined Alice Person's new course. Daughter Josie fell gravely ill in 1874, diagnosed with scrofula, a tuberculosis strain that was common in the nineteenth century, when most people still drank unpasteurized milk. The doctor did not expect Josie to survive the night. An elderly neighbor arrived at Person's doorstep with an offer of help in the form of what she called an Indian remedy. Reluctant at first, the desperate mother prepared the herbal concoction and gave it to her child. Then she watched in amazement as Josie rebounded, completely cured within three weeks. Josie's recovery marked the advent of Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy. Person had been selling fertilizer, perhaps as early as 1872, but now her focus shifted. She spent the next several years perfecting the recipe, treating locals suffering from various conditions described as "blood trouble" and curing them without fail. In keeping with the common practice of manufacturers of patent medicines, in 1878 she applied for and received not a patent, despite the name, but a registered trademark through the United States Patent and Trademark Office that recognized her intellectual property rights in the product. Soon she gained overwhelming confidence in her remedy and was earning a "considerable income." By 1882 she had become a self-described "Woman with a Mission."[6]

With her entrance into the world of business, Person joined an increasing number of women for whom work outside the home was no longer unusual. Between 1865 and 1900 North Carolina women's employment increased dramatically. Twenty-three percent of the state's women were gainfully employed by the end of the nineteenth century, having increased steadily from 58,860 in 1870 to 160,161 in 1900. North Carolina's percentage of gainfully employed females aged ten and over was higher than the national average at each census between 1870 and 1900. The state's population remained primarily rural well into the twentieth century, and the majority of women enumerated in the census worked in agriculture. Although the total percentage of female agricultural workers decreased slightly in this period, it remained close to half of all employed women throughout, and it stood at 46 percent in 1900. Domestics and laundresses, most of whom were black women, made up another 35 percent of all women workers. African American women and those classified as "colored," or "persons of negro descent, Chinese, Japanese, and Indians," accounted for a slight majority at 55 percent of all female workers in the state. Just under

half were white women, and more of them provided vital services supporting the Piedmont's burgeoning commercial and industrial expansion as dressmakers, milliners, merchants, and boardinghouse operators than worked as factory hands until 1890. Change occurred so rapidly that while 7,220 women still made a living in North Carolina crafting clothing by hand in 1910, nearly 10 percent of all employed women—three times the number of dressmakers and milliners—were by then working in manufacturing, mostly the textile mills and tobacco factories that dotted the Piedmont.[7]

Due in large part to economic realities, the dependent legal status of women was in flux after the Civil War. Married women traditionally relinquished all property rights and income to their husbands under coverture. Under the law, a married woman's legal identity was one with her husband, and she could not act separately from him. She could not enter into contracts, particularly to buy or sell property, independently of her husband; creditors could seize her separate estate or inheritance to cover her husband's debts; and any income she earned belonged to her husband. In the interest of sheltering some family assets from creditors, a few states established married women's property acts in the antebellum period, reversing some aspects of coverture. Following the Civil War, southern states either enacted or reinforced existing married women's property laws to keep families from falling into total ruin. While laws governing property offered protection mainly to the wealthy, wives who earned a living were also gaining the right to hold on to their personal earnings. Married women further gained the legal and economic status of feme sole traders so that they could enter into contracts and conduct business as if they were single. In North Carolina this was permitted only if they first gained the legal consent of their husbands, and even with this designation judges were careful to limit wives to rights specifically granted by their husbands. Alice Person registered as a feme sole trader when she relocated her business to Charlotte in 1884, only months before her husband died. Scholar David Hursh concludes that Joe Person fought his wife's independent status for years, opposed to her pursuit of a nontraditional female role, but his age, poor health, and inability to provide, combined with Alice's success, led him reluctantly to agree to her feme sole status. That few small businesswomen in North Carolina registered as free traders reflected enduring conservative views.[8]

Indeed, while this legislation acknowledged women's growing economic agency, social acceptance of independent women was slow in the South. An anxious public worried whether white women could remain respectable while earning a living. Most imagined that a workforce of women was a temporary situation and took comfort in the expectation that a stronger economy would

lead to the reestablishment of the patriarchal household and traditional gender roles. Alice Person echoed the sentiment of most white southerners who argued that white women did not desire to work, but the devastation of the war and slow economic recovery compelled it. "Believe me, no woman will voluntarily go out in the world among men, to do man's work," she insisted. Traditional ideas about the proper role and place of women also had the effect of masking women's expanding labor force participation. Although a large proportion of employed women were married, husbands held on to the appearance of being patriarchs and primary breadwinners. This was because a great number of women worked out of their homes and yet continued to perform their domestic duties, blurring the lines between domesticity and labor. Public records like the federal census and city directories also inaccurately or incompletely reported on married women's jobs and economic contributions. Such was the case for Alice Person, who was "keeping house" according to the 1880 census, even though she had acquired her trademark and started her business two years earlier. Husband Joe remained listed as farmer, despite the fact that his paralysis had prevented him from working the land for years.[9]

Given the late nineteenth-century transformation of the nation's economy and the persistent association of women to domesticity, women's petty enterprises hardly seemed to constitute businesses at all in the eyes of most observers. Contemporary observations of Alice Person and other businesswomen reinforced prevailing notions that ambition, a trait valued among businessmen, was not a desirable characteristic in most women. With his pronouncement that "Two Parts Man Is Mrs. Person," a Raleigh newspaper reporter suggested that Person's "manly" traits provided the most reasonable explanation for her success:

> It is clear that in a business transaction with Mrs. Person it would be a "man to man" with the odds in favor of the woman, it is equally patent that in a moment of distress or a call for pity, the Mrs. Joe Person of "Remedy" fame and drumming success would vanish instantly into the character of a very round ordinary and wholly sympathetic old lady, with the foolishness of mother love and tenderness her characteristic traits. After all, it is this very mixture of the love of an everyday mother and the prowess and determination of a hustling young man which worked together for the establishment of a unique business, and made something more than a man out of Mrs. Joe Person.[10]

Meant as complimentary rather than disapproving, this assessment of Person nonetheless underscored the notion that women were in danger of becoming "unsexed" when they demonstrated business acumen. Recent studies now sug-

gest gendered enterprises such as boardinghouses and dressmaking shops gave a number of women a role in business history. Yet success for a businessman was measured in terms of credit, capital, customers, and competition, while the true measure of a businesswoman's success was whether her pursuits fit within the gendered framework of domesticity, with judgments of her virtue based more on her femininity than on her skills.[11]

Alice Person had to market and brand her remedy to compete with the myriad elixirs, potions, tonics, bitters, and washes already available to consumers, promising miracle cures for every conceivable ailment. She thought her product could stand out by gaining endorsements from prominent North Carolina physicians, a plan that included a visit to Raleigh in 1882 during the annual state medical convention. She asked doctors to test her remedy on volunteers responding to a notice she posted and, confident that they would find it medically beneficial, to endorse it and present it to the wider medical community as a prescriptive medicine. Balancing their reluctance as professionals to back a patent medicine with the expectation that they demonstrate proper "courtesy to a lady," this group of doctors offered support in private meetings but never in public. Encouraged by this, she pressed them individually to provide public endorsements. One agreed to do so but did not follow through. Persevering, she insisted on a hearing at the convention. A few doctors agreed to allow her to attend, but a final ruling that it would be an "irregular proceeding" thwarted her efforts. Agitated but undeterred, Person took her predicament to Raleigh's *News and Observer* two months later, hoping to garner public sympathy.[12]

Although she did not gain the endorsements she wanted, this episode secured Person valuable ammunition. She repeatedly used her quarrel with the Raleigh doctors in advertising campaigns, playing up the growing tension between patent medicine manufacturers and medical professionals. Suspicion swirled around those in a business deemed "the offspring of cupidity and credulity." They were regarded by many doctors as cheats who conned the infirm, ignorant, and desperate with products that were at best a placebo and at worst a medium for opiates and poisons. In article after article, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* warned of the harmful effects of patent medicines and urged the passage of legislation to regulate the business. Person's husband had called her foolish when she set off for the medical convention, warning that doctors would rebuff her because they would not want "anything to do with anything of the kind." Yet he also acknowledged that she cured patients whom doctors had not, a point she placed at the center of her advertising campaigns—that her medicine worked when the "Raleigh Doctors Failed." She provided dozens of testimonials from men and women across the state who had followed their

doctors' recommendations for years, never to find relief until they used Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy. Among her many supporters were Governor William Holden and Judge William J. Clarke and his wife, the writer Mary Bayard Clarke. Person included her own story of daughter Josie's miraculous cure. She promoted the elixir as a curative for a multitude of ailments, including indigestion, loss of appetite, skin eruptions, ulcerations, scrofula, rheumatism, blood disease, heart disease, drunkenness, and cancer.[13]

Doctors had a reputation of being particularly inept when treating women patients. In an era when, as historian Jane Marcellus has summarized it, "femaleness itself was seen as a sickness," one of the best-known and best-selling national brands, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, was marketed specifically for "female complaints." Although Person marketed her product to men and women, women's health was a frequent subject of her advertisements. Her 1884 pamphlet proclaimed her tonic "a Boon to Ladies Suffering from Diseases Peculiar to their Sex." One satisfied female customer wrote to Person of the remedy curing not only her "womb trouble" but also easing the pain experienced by her teething babies, adding that her husband said the tonic was "better than a doctor." Person used this 1888 letter as an advertisement in newspapers for several years.[14]

Person's business practices reflected tactics commonly used by patent medicine distributors in the late nineteenth century, especially a heavy reliance on newspaper advertising. Such was her faith in this medium that Person reported she invested eighteen dollars of the first twenty-five-dollar payment she earned on newspaper ads. She used newspapers to run gimmicks and contests, as in 1899 when she and Raleigh's *News and Observer* awarded a ten-dollar prize to the person who submitted the best advertisement for the remedy. Her ads frequently included testimonials from customers, such as one from Samuel Cline declaring that "like magic," the remedy had cured his wife's kidney disease. She also relied heavily on branding. On her trading cards, labels, and company letterhead, Person displayed her trademark Native American image, a common practice among patent medicine distributors, intended to evoke largely bygone Indian healing practices presumably captured in modern formulas.[15]

Although she could not have anticipated that her musical training, part of a traditional education for a woman of her status, would one day provide income, Person incorporated performance as yet another aspect of her brand. Friends visiting the Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy exhibit at the North Carolina State Exposition in 1884 persuaded her to entertain visitors at a nearby piano exhibit. Her performance resulted in a contract to play at the annual state fair, which she did for years, presumably with bottles of her remedy in tow. Her soaring

popularity was enhanced by frequent newspaper reports on her activities, and her "fame for 'clawing the ivory' [was] almost as great as her patent medicine." She subsequently performed at fairs in Richmond and Atlanta and as far away as Dallas, where she earned ten dollars a day. On at least one of these occasions she so completely won over her fair employer that he put up the money to print and distribute cards advertising her remedy.[16]

While many medicine shows of the era verged on scandalous, Person offered a traditional performance in keeping with her background that endeared her to many white audiences. Fairs and expositions sought to promote the South's modernization, but this was also an era in which white southerners engaged in Lost Cause mythmaking and memorializing that turned on romanticized narratives about slavery and plantation life. The tunes Person played, described as "old ante-wartime melodies and songs," captured that spirit. Her music had such broad appeal, ranging from old favorites like "Swanee River" and "Dixie" to tunes of local origin, that Person copyrighted and published her arrangements in 1889 as *A Collection of Popular Airs as Arranged and Played Only by Mrs. Joe Person at the Southern Expositions*. Revenue from the sale of song sheets helped pay for remedy advertisements.[17]

Despite her growing fame, Person described herself simply as a "drummer," or traveling saleswoman. In the tradition of the itinerant peddler, she visited people's homes to sell her remedy and her music, entertaining them in exchange for free room and board whenever possible. In addition to door-to-door sales and word-of-mouth contacts, Person sold her remedy through druggists and general stores to appeal to a broader range of customers and pursue greater profits. Rural routes appealed to her most, and it was reported that there was "not a cross-roads store in the state that she does not visit." She certainly made a lasting impression on one reporter from Virginia who reminisced, "As a small boy . . . I can remember my father taking me along with him to the store to buy kerosene oil for the lamps. I can also remember that on one occasion when I was at the store Mrs. Joe Person drove up in her rig laden with her famous 'Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy.'"[18]

Although one newspaper article noted that Person earned a "fair income," she had insufficient capital to expand her business, telling a reporter, "I haven't much money but enough to pay my debts." While early business records are scant in number, various newspaper articles provide anecdotal evidence of Person's sales and income. An undated newspaper clipping reported sales of 1,200 bottles in one month. The *Durham Globe* not only reported sales of 4,447 bottles in one year but also touted Person's business as investment worthy. At a cost of $1 per bottle of bitters, the alcohol and herb solution customers drank,

and 50¢ for a package of wash for external use, the company earned perhaps as much as $5,000 to $10,000 annually in its early years. When a fire destroyed her laboratory in Kittrell in 1898, she and son Rufus claimed combined losses of $2,400. Person indicated that hers was a total loss because insurance coverage amounted to only $1,000 and "everything she had was invested in the stock," the rest of her profits having gone to support her family. Circumstances improved over the years, and the company appears to have more than doubled its revenue during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Upon the Persons' relocation to Charlotte in 1904, a railway pamphlet highlighting Charlotte's business community noted a dramatic increase in remedy sales in the first three years, from eight thousand to fifteen thousand units annually.[19]

Since Person embodied the company and its brand, her workload did not ease up even in retirement. In 1910 she sold the company and trademark to son Rufus for a lump sum of $5,000 and payments of $125 each month for the rest of her life. Rufus in turn leased the company to an investor, Guy Barnes. Despite the fact that Person was now seventy, her travel schedule became no less demanding. Perhaps because she was answering to others, Person also began more fastidious record keeping. From June 1910 to May 1911 her sales calls took her from Charlotte and its environs in the west to Greenville and surrounding towns in the east, and to dozens of points in between. She occasionally ventured into southern Virginia towns and into Charlotte's neighboring city of Rock Hill, South Carolina. The only time during that year when she was not on the road for the company was in July when she stayed home "putting up the remedy." Person also visited druggists and "jobbers," or wholesalers, on whom she relied for the bulk of orders placed with the company. She paid them an average commission of 2 percent and offered druggists bottles of her remedy in exchange for their customer mailing lists. Wholesalers took orders from some of the regular high-volume customers in cities Person visited, as well as druggists as far away as Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond. Her account book reveals that the company sold over twenty-three thousand units that year, and she personally sold close to eight thousand of those units while on sales trips.[20]

For more than thirty years, Person crisscrossed the state of North Carolina in this manner, maintaining primary responsibility for manufacturing and sales for her independently owned business. In the early years, however, she had been open to taking on investors and business partners to help her realize her goals. On a sales trip to Salisbury in the spring of 1883, she met Pittsburgh native George Davidson, who had relocated to the Charlotte area to take advantage of new mining opportunities. Eager to invest in promising enterprises and impressed by the success Person had achieved, Davidson offered to buy her

business for $20,000 plus royalties. Telling Davidson that what was to him just another investment was to her "success . . . fulfillment . . . everything," she cautiously accepted his offer and a $100 deposit. She then carried the contract to her attorney for peace of mind and returned home to await the payoff that would save her family's home and provide them security. In August the long-awaited letter arrived, accompanied by Davidson's brief note that he had decided to forego investing in her remedy in favor of another venture. Person boarded the train to Raleigh at dawn the following day to meet with her lawyer, who advised her to sue Davidson for damages in the amount of $30,000. Repeatedly pressing for her case to go to court, she grudgingly accepted a settlement of $1,250 years later. Concluding that her lawyer had not fought hard enough for her best interest and that the legal system favored those with more money, she found this experience a bitter pill to swallow.[21]

The business partner whose investment convinced Person to relocate to Charlotte in 1884 proved as undependable as Davidson, and she nearly ended up bankrupt in less than a year. Charlotte businessman Charles Jones had sought Person out because he saw value in investing in her business. Her agreement with Jones stipulated that she would be paid seventy-five dollars each month plus the expenses she incurred manufacturing and traveling to sell the remedy. To her dismay, she discovered in September that her partner, who took on the responsibilities of management and advertising, had failed to pay for supplies, namely whiskey and bottles. As the company's primary salesperson, Person had been on the road several times over those nine months and by her accounting had sold ten thousand bottles. Yet bills had gone unpaid, and the company had a mere $1.50 in cash. Aside from her humiliation, Person's primary concern was the protection of her trademark, the biggest asset in the company at that point. Jones offered to buy it from her so she could walk away, but she could not bear the thought of someone else selling the remedy she had developed. Person had no other choice but to borrow $1,000 to pay off her debt and get supplies to manufacture more of her product. After negotiating with Jones to keep her trademark and dissolve their partnership, she went back on the road as soon as possible.[22]

Despite this brush with failure, Person took a chance on a second partnership the following year that determined once and for all the independent direction of her business. Uneasy about his youth but enticed by Tarboro businessman E. B. Hodges's investment of $2,000, Person again relocated and agreed to a $100 monthly salary plus expenses. Hodges quickly grew discouraged when sales did not match his expectations, which he based on Person's calculations of the different and larger market of Charlotte. Although she saw good qualities in him,

Person assessed her partner as lacking the necessary drive and ambition. It was now clear to her that no one could better ensure that Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy was a success than she. Person and Hodges dissolved their partnership in 1886. She subsequently settled in Kittrell, a resort town near the Person family home that attracted wealthy tourists to its mineral springs and the Glass House hotel, where Person began performing regularly. It was then that her son Rufus, at age sixteen, became the only other business partner she ever had. Kittrell remained the headquarters for the business until the Persons permanently relocated to Charlotte in 1904.[23]

Notwithstanding Alice Person's eventual success, her story reveals ambiguity over the social acceptance of women in business. Pity and concern were common responses to elite women's reduced postwar circumstances, especially for those who needed to work. By choosing traditional women's work, most avoided disapproval. All the same, the prevailing attitude among southern elites was that a white woman who pursued an occupation had "socially lowered herself," and widows frequently opted instead to rely on the incomes of sons and daughters still living at home or else become dependents in their adult children's households. Person confronted this way of thinking when elite women in Tarboro, whom she would otherwise have viewed as her peers, left her with the indelible memory of "the contemptuous swish of their skirts as they passed, lest they should come into contact with a working woman!" She observed with discomfort that a "yankee" was not only welcomed but "visited, drived, flowered, and ice creamed," because "she wore diamonds and I—a working apron." Person was made to feel that, because of her work, she floated along the border of respectability instead of resting squarely within it.[24]

Rather than retreat, Person faced her detractors and established a defense. Her curiously titled autobiography, "The Chivalry of Man, as Exemplified in the Life of Mrs. Joe Person," centers on how obstacles she had to overcome early in her career, particularly her conflicts with men, shaped her ideology. Chivalry, she expressed throughout her manuscript, was all but dead in the postwar South. "What would become of the weaker sex," she questioned acerbically after one disappointment, "without this Chivalry to defend us!" Her answer was that women had to defend themselves, as she had done with the Raleigh doctors. With no other means to support her children, taking on the role of breadwinner "was a move of love and duty for my household idols," she argued, "not of choice and preference." Insisting that providence brought to her the means by which to support her family, Person dismissed as unfounded negative judgments regarding her business. It alarmed her that otherwise honorable men were determined to stand in her way rather than champion her cause. Indignant, she suggested

that such attacks were actually a thin disguise for anxiety about changes in gender roles that threatened male authority.[25]

Person's critics were not only troubled by the nature of her business, but they were also surprised by her combativeness. Having read the Person Remedy Company's pamphlet detailing the trouble she had in Raleigh, the Reverend E. A. Yates of Wilmington wrote a letter to the editor of the *Raleigh Evening Visitor* expressing his outrage. He understood doctors' reasons for refusing to lend their support and judged Person as "villainous" for trying to destroy their reputations. "Why force a great principle as maintained by physicians for the good of society to yield to the claims of a secret remedy," stated Yates, "even if it was discovered by a woman." She replied to Yates at once. Her pamphlet had been read and approved by the doctors in question, she wrote in self-defense, and her personal references were "as high names as Carolina could afford," yet Yates had listed her among those forces that would tear civilization apart. She accused Yates of attacking her under the protection of his ordination, mistakenly thinking she would be powerless to defend herself and seeking to injure someone who was "pursuing the vocation which duty had assigned her." She demanded he do the honorable thing and publicly recant his statement.[26]

In this fight, Person had public support of at least one other prominent North Carolina figure: Mary Bayard Clarke. A native North Carolinian whose daughter married Person's younger brother, Clarke had enjoyed a writing career her entire adult life, published poems and articles throughout her marriage, and served as co-editor of a Republican newspaper with her husband, lawyer and judge William J. Clarke of New Bern. In the 1870s and 1880s, Mary Bayard Clarke had taken up the cause of women's employment and supported better job opportunities and pay for women. In a letter to the *Evening Visitor*, Clarke reiterated Person's suggestion that men had forsaken their duty and wrongly abandoned women to defend themselves. She declared that women like Person, "pursuing a legitimate business in an energetic manner," should never worry about injury from men because the character of "a lady" should never be questioned. Such action only reflected poorly on the man, Clarke argued, and she wittily remarked that the only plausible excuse for Yates's behavior was that he had "bad blood." "As Mrs. Person's Remedy is a well known blood purifier," Clarke penned, "I think if he were tried by a Jury of women, he would be sentenced to one year's use of it, to the great improvement both of his health and temper." Men who challenged women working for a living, Clarke concluded, proved derelict in their duty to honor and uphold women.[27]

This strategy of reminding men of their duty prompted Yates to issue a public apology and declare that he was "among the last men who would willingly hurt

a lady." Unmoved and no longer appeased by an apology, Person declared, "the mountain labored and brought forth a mouse." On her next sales trip to Wilmington, a male member of Yates's congregation told her that many of his fellow church members were unhappy with the minister's behavior toward her. Person acted on this information by attending the next church service and asking her new acquaintance to be sure to inform Yates that she was there. Person delighted in watching Yates squirm as he prayed for the "pure and holy motives" of everyone there. "Revenge is sweet," she remembered, for she had acquired a taste for it.[28]

Bolstered by this experience, Person was soon engaged in another battle she characterized as pivotal. Dr. Julian Baker of Tarboro seemed concerned that patients might avoid sound medical treatment in favor of patent medicines, and he criticized Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy as quackery to the family of a patient, Mary Staton, when he learned she had taken it. Once Baker maligned her remedy, Tarboro residents began demanding refunds from Person, compelling her to respond. In her initial letter to Baker, Person asked if it was true that he had disparaged her. He answered that until the remedy was approved and accepted by the medical community, he could not consider it legitimate but that she should not consider his professional opinion to be a personal assault. Person defended her position and accused Baker of taking credit for something she had done. He replied with an exhaustive account of the treatment he and his father, also a doctor, had administered over time to the patient, adding, "I do not propose to be the instrument by which you can bring yourself and your remedy into notoriety." He continued: "If there is any virtue in your medicine, it is certainly not suited to such cases as Miss Staton's. If it affects others as it did her, I advise you to trade it off for a dog, give him half a dozen bottles, stoppers and all and if that don't kill him, shoot him." She hurriedly drafted a letter suggesting that *he* was a dog that needed to be shot, but propriety, she wrote, stopped her from sending it. Frustrated by Baker's refusal to back down, she addressed the controversy and defended herself by once again taking it public. Person published a card bearing signatures of those familiar with the case to refute his insistence that his medical care and not the remedy saved Mary Staton. She noted with satisfaction that in the wake of the Baker affair, a dry goods store in Tarboro placed a large order for the remedy, followed by an order of equal size within sixty days. In a sharp-tongued tone similar to that which she had used with the Reverend Yates, she referred to Baker as "little fellow" and "little Baker," clearly an indication of her assessment of his character.[29]

Choosing bold effrontery over the reserve deemed proper for white southern women and refusing to defer to the authority of men were risky behaviors, but

they paid off for Person. Her customer base as well as her celebrity grew despite, or perhaps because of, the controversies she stirred. Baker charged that Person benefited from the protection of the petticoat. Other male foes faced the same dilemma over the best way to deal with a "lady" without appearing to attack her. She expressed throughout her manuscript that she was at war, constantly battling notions of the appropriate sphere of women as well as men who had forgotten their sense of duty. In the end Person challenged southern society to accept an alternative vision of woman's place: "I am often asked if I am not a woman's rights 'man,' and I emphatically answer Yes—a staunch believer in her 'right' to earn her living, and be respected for it; in her 'right' to defend herself from the assaults of men, when assailed." Although Person never advocated for a woman's right to vote, her words inspired descriptions of her as feminist. Louise Stephenson, the family member responsible for donating her papers for preservation, described her great-grandmother as "a resourceful, dedicated, enormously talented woman who could have been the original Women's Lib advocate." Reporter T. H. Pearce agreed with Stephenson's assessment, praising Person as "a lady ahead of her time."[30]

Alice Person had been operating her business for over twenty-five years when, in 1906, the federal government began to regulate potentially harmful products through the Pure Food and Drugs Act. The law now mandated that patent medicine companies, previously protected by trade secrets, disclose ingredients on the labeling. In keeping with the new law, labels on bottles of Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy revealed its 25 percent alcohol content and herbs touted to have medicinal properties, including sarsaparilla, pipsissewa, queen's root, prickly ash bark, and trillium, all of which Person family members had gathered from the woods over the years. Government testing following the act determined that the remedy "contained no ingredient or combination of ingredients capable of producing the therapeutic effects claimed." In 1915 Rufus faced charges of "misleading, false, and fraudulent" labeling, to which he pleaded guilty. In addition to securing a bond for $1,000, Rufus agreed to label the bottles and brand the product appropriately. The original case was dismissed upon finding that the company had no assets and "no corporate existence," although Rufus maintained the trademark at least into the 1930s. The Person Remedy Company last appeared in the Charlotte city directory in the early 1920s, with women again at the helm. Rufus's wife served as president, his daughter—aptly named Alice—as vice president, and Rufus took the position of secretary-treasurer, perhaps turning over the primary business operations because he then earned his living operating a farm. The professionalization of medicine and government regulation of drugs led to the decline and eventual demise of the patent

medicine business, but by operating in its heyday, Alice Person avoided the legal challenges that her son inherited along with the business.[31]

While on a trip to the western part of the country with her sister in 1913, seventy-three-year-old Alice Person died suddenly of a stroke. A memorial article in Charlotte's *Evening Chronicle* recounted the history of her business and affirmed what most readers likely already knew given her celebrity, that she was "one of the most remarkable women in North Carolina." As had been customary throughout her career, the newspaper profile reminded readers of her exceptional qualities: "She was remarkable in robustness of physique, in keenness of mind, in hopefulness of spirit and her executive ability had been estimated as altogether unusual for a woman of her age and her opportunities." In her will Person reiterated her 1910 agreement leaving the business to Rufus as it was due to "his faithful attention to my business that I am able to give anyone anything." She also listed assets in stock, certificates of deposit, and notes in the amount of $4,562.96 to be divided among her surviving children and their families. Her primary concern was to provide for daughter Josie, whose dependency now shifted to Rufus. Otherwise, she assessed the "needs of each" of her children, "knowing that Wiley Person and Gibson (Person) Harris do not need me." That she had been able to fulfill her children's needs through her entrepreneurial success was perhaps what she considered the most important part of her legacy. "I have cared for them well, have clothed them well, and educated them well," she wrote, "so that they can take the stand in life that they are entitled to."[32]

Person's declaration of her life as "out of the ordinary" was certainly true, although not because she worked for a living or because the Civil War had turned her life upside down. She shared those characteristics with many women in the postwar South. It was through her challenging ideas about what a woman could or could not be, and should or should not do, that she ultimately distinguished herself, cemented her reputation, and achieved success. Upon penning her autobiography, Person stated that men had stopped battling her because her reputation was so firmly established that they could cause her no harm. She turned those public battles to her advantage by employing the rhetoric most suited to her status, appealing to the public as a genteel southern lady who required their support and expected chivalrous behavior from men. Exploiting the commitment to a domestic ideal for women rather than letting it get in her way, she asserted that earning a living was a right intricately coupled with existing ideology regarding a woman's duty to her family, even though she had to spend long periods of time away from her children in order to provide for them. Her seemingly contradictory response to her economic and social situation, as she both harkened and challenged tradition, reflected a transformation

in white southern womanhood and changing attitudes regarding independent, income-earning women.[33]

NOTES

1. Alice Morgan Person, "The Chivalry of Man, as Exemplified in the Life of Mrs. Joe Person," typewritten transcription of handwritten manuscript (undated), folder 8, Alice Morgan Person Papers (#3987), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as SHC), 1–2, 21–22; David Hursh and Chris Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music: A Biography of Mrs. Joe Person, Patent Remedy Entrepreneur and Musician, Including the Complete Text of Her 1903 Autobiography* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 2009), 11–13, 29–30, 53; *Authorized Visitors' Guide to the North Carolina State Exposition and Raleigh, 1884* (Raleigh: Exposition Guide Publishing Company, 1884), 93.

2. Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 153–206; Angela P. Robbins, "Bridging the Old South and the New: Women in the Economic Transformation of the North Carolina Piedmont, 1865–1920" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010), 76–141.

3. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 4–5; "A Woman's Enterprise. An Important and Promising Industry Yet in Its Infancy. How a Persevering Woman Overcame Obstacles and Achieved Success in Spite of Unfavorable Circumstances," *Durham Globe* (Durham. N.C., published 1889–94), undated clipping, Person family album, folders 1 and 2, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 14–15.

4. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 1–2; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 9–12, 71–72, 85; Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784–1860* (New York: Norton, 1984), 1–53; Louis H. Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordan, *North Carolina Troops, 1861–1865: A Roster* (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1987), 11:305–6, 313. The Person family land was originally in Granville County but formed part of a tract ceded to Franklin County in 1875. See 1860 Federal Manuscript Census, Fort Creek District, Granville County, and 1880 Federal Manuscript Census, Franklinton Township, Franklin County, available at http://www.ancestry.com/ (accessed April 16, 2009).

5. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 1, 21–22; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 9, 30, 85–86.

6. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 2–5; Diary of Lucy Morgan Beard, 1872–1873, folder 11, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Samuel Thomas Peace, *"Zeb's Black Baby": Vance County, North Carolina, a Short History* (Henderson, N.C: n.p., 1955), 358; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 12–15, 78; *The American Heritage Medical Dictionary* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), at http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/scrofula (accessed May 21, 2011).

7. Claudia Goldin, "Female Labor Force Participation: The Origin of Black and White Differences, 1870 and 1880," *Journal of Economic History* 37, no. 1 (1977): 87–108; *U.S. Census Reports: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census: The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1872), "Females Engaged in Each Occupation. Table XXVII (B.)—The United States," 686–95; "Selected Occupations, with Age and Sex, and Nativity. Table XXX.—State of North Carolina," 751; *U.S. Census Reports: Compendium of the Tenth Census, June 1, 1880*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1885); *Special Census Report on the Occupations of the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1896); *Special Reports—*

Occupations at the Twelfth Census, 1900 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904), "Statistics of Occupations. Table 33.—Total Males and Females 10 Years of Age and Over Engaged in Each of 303 Specified Occupations: 1900," 134–43; "Statistics of Occupations. Table 41"; "States and Territories. Explanatory Notes," 90–91; "Statistics of Occupations. Table 41.—Total Males and Females 10 Years of Age and Over Engaged in Selected Groups of Occupations, Classified by General Nativity, Color, Conjugal Condition, Months Unemployed, Age Periods, and Parentage: 1900. North Carolina," 356; "Statistics of Population. Table 9.—Population by Sex, General Nativity, and Color, by States and Territories: 1900," 482–83.

8. On married women's property laws in the post–Civil War period see Suzanne Lebsock, "Radical Reconstruction and the Property Rights of Southern Women," *Journal of Southern History* 43, no. 2 (1977): 195–216 (on North Carolina in particular, 209–10); Carole Shammas, "Re-assessing the Married Women's Property Acts," *Journal of Women's History* 6, no. 1 (1994): 9–30; B. Zorina Khan, "Married Women's Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790–1895," *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 2, Papers Presented at the Fifty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Economic History Association (June 1996): 356–88; Nancy Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861–1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 140, 171–77; Karin Zipf, "No Longer under Cover(ture): Marriage, Divorce, and Gender in the 1868 Constitutional Convention" in Paul D. Escott, ed., *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 193–219; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 86–89.

9. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 46; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 54; George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 112; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, "The Civil War, Tradition, and 'the Woman Question,' 1870–1920" in Edward D. C. Campbell Jr. and Kym S. Rice, ed., *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy* (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy; Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 176–83. On transforming gender roles following the Civil War, see especially Lee Ann Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860–1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); 1880 Federal Manuscript Census, Franklinton Township, Franklin County.

10. "Two Parts Man Is Mrs. Person," *Raleigh Daily News and Observer*, June 25, 1905, reprinted as "Mrs. Joe Person and Her Career," *Charlotte Observer*, March 16, 1913, Person family album, Person Papers (#3987), SHC.

11. Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 5; Susan Ingalls Lewis, *Unexceptional Women: Female Proprietors in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Albany, New York, 1830–1885* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 1–13. See also Susan M. Yohn, "Crippled Capitalists: The Inscription of Economic Dependence and the Challenge of Female Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century America," *Feminist Economics* 12, no. 1–2 (2006): 85–109; Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), and "A Gendered Enterprise: Placing Nineteenth-Century Businesswomen in History," *Business History Review* 72, no. 2, Gender and Business (1998): 188–217; Sandra L. Wheeler, "To Get an Honest Livin': Professional Boardinghouse Keepers in Hartford, 1890," *Connecticut History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 48–65; Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

12. "In order to prove to the Medical Fraternity and the public generally . . . ," *Raleigh News and*

Observer, February 16, March 1 and 3, 1882; "Why Mrs. Joe Person's 'Test Cases' Failed," *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 12, 1882; "Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy. Is a Specific for all Blood Diseases," Mrs. Joe Person Remedy Company, Charlotte, N.C. (1884?), booklet, Alice Morgan Person Collection (#1116), Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, digital collections at http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/955 (accessed August 1, 2011); Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 5–9; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 15–19.

13. "Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy," Person Collection (#1116), ECU at http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/955 (accessed August 1, 2011); M. I. Wilbert, "The Patent Medicine Problem" *American Journal of Pharmacy* 86 (June 1914): 256–63.

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15. "The Patent Medicine Evil," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 20 (1905): 1621; "'Patent Medicine' Advertising in Newspapers and on the Trade Package," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 22 (1916): 1603–4; James Harvey Young, "Patent Medicines: An Early Example of Competitive Marketing," *The Journal of Economic History* 20, no. 4 (December 1960): 648–56; Person family album, p. 12, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 18; James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 176–77; *Raleigh News and Observer*, March 9, 1883, April 3, 1890, October 14 and November 18, 1899; *Greenville Daily Reflector*, May 16 and June 1, 1898; Adelaide Hechtlinger, *The Great Patent Medicine Era, or, Without Benefit of Doctor* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., 1970), 234–37; Marcellus, 800–803. An image of one of Person's trading cards is available at http://www.antiquebottles.com/southeast/raleigh/2004/Jan/MrsJoe2.jpg (accessed June 1, 2011); Person's company letterhead and labels displaying Native American images are in the Person Collection (#1116), ECU at http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/special/ead/view.aspx?id=1116&show=objects (accessed August 1, 2011).

16. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 49–50; Person family album, pp. 1–2, 13–14, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Peace, *"Zeb's Black Baby,"* 115, 358; "Mrs. Joe Person Positively Coming," *Dallas Morning News*, October 16, 1891; Chris Goertzen, "Mrs. Joe Person's *Popular Airs*: Early Blackface Minstrel Tunes in Oral Tradition," *Ethnomusicology* 35, no. 1 (1991): 46–49; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 55–57, 167–87.

17. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 53–54; Person family album, p. 14, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 55, 59, 60–61, 109–14, 116, 167–87; Goertzen, "Mrs. Joe Person's *Popular Airs*," 32–33, 38–39, 46–49.

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24. Terrell Armistead Crow and Mary Moulton Barden, eds., *Live Your Own Life: The Family Papers of Mary Bayard Clarke, 1854–1886* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), xxvi–xxvii, 372–75; Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 42–43; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 50–51.

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29. Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 31–37; Hursh and Goertzen, *Good Medicine and Good Music*, 40–46.

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31. For general patent medicine history, see Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*; Hechtlinger, *The Great Patent Medicine Era*; Stage, *Female Complaints*. On the effects of the Food and Drugs Act, see Russell S. Sobel, "Public Health and the Placebo: The Legacy of the 1906 Pure Food and Drugs Act," *Cato Journal* 21, no. 3 (2002): 469–71. The actions against Person's company are available online through the United States National Library of Medicine (hereafter cited as NLM). See "Misbranding of 'Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy.' U.S. v. 17 Cases of Mrs. Joe Person's Remedy. Product ordered released

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32. "Mrs. Joe Person Dies Suddenly While on Her Way to California," *Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, June 13, 1913, reprinted in *Halifax Record-Advertiser*, March 30, 1972; handwritten will, folder 5, Person Papers (#3987), SHC; Person, "The Chivalry of Man," 45–46.

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Mary Bayard Clarke

Design for "Upsetting the Established Order of Our Dear Old Conservative State"

TERRELL ARMISTEAD CROW

Mary Bayard Devereux Clarke (1827–86), by birth and upbringing, should have followed the traditional domestic role ascribed to elite white women in antebellum North Carolina. Instead, she described herself as "intensely individual in my thoughts and sentiments" and advised one of her sons, "live your own life," adding, "I was brought up to think I ought to live some body elses life and must take my opinions—and feelings as I did my clothes when a child, they were cut and made properly and I must wear them."[1] Having written poems and stories from an early age, she chose to become a professional writer when few of her peers approved of married women working outside the home. Indeed, some in her family did not approve of her career.[2] Sister Catherine (Kate) Devereux Edmondston chided women who published, saying, "O! beware of stepping out of your sphere. . . . Then indeed you would forget a woman's first ornament, modesty. Women have no business to rush into print; so wide an arena does not become them."[3]

The Devereux family, through inheritance and marriage, maintained multiple plantations located in several counties along the Roanoke River bottom as well as comfortable homes in Raleigh. Mary's father, a Yale-educated attorney, also owned more than a thousand African Americans enslaved on those plantations.[4] The Devereux women—beneficiaries of and participants in the plantation and slave economy of the South—were expected to manage their homes and care for their families while male relatives pursued public interests. They married, reared children, spent summers at popular resorts, engaged in philanthropic roles in their churches, and became accomplished hostesses.

Domestic concerns constituted the primary occupations for most elite south-

ern women before the Civil War. In return, they received the benefits of being a "lady" under male protection within the South's patriarchal society and, with luck, found marriage partners to support them. One historian astutely observed that most privileged southern women simply fulfilled destinies rather than created ones of their own.[5] Gender roles for southern white women stressed the ideals of dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers.[6] White southern males stood at the apex of society as heads of households, businesses, and government. Black women, the vast majority of whom were enslaved, performed the domestic chores that enabled planter women to travel, entertain, attend church, and oversee the education of their children.[7]

Mary Devereux, born into this conservative world and well aware of class, race, and gender distinctions, nurtured ambitions of moving beyond domestic boundaries and into the public world of literature. Her writing and development received encouragement from her mother and eldest sister as well as from an Englishwoman hired to tutor her. In her highly autobiographical published poem "I've Been Thinking," she described how her "Mother's love watched o'er me" and her "fostering kindness" guided her. Mary's eldest sister, Frances, saved some of the early letters Mary wrote in the 1830s, pleased with her aptitude. Frances also supported Mary's publishing interests in later years.[8]

Although Mary benefited from her family's wealth and the superior education and luxuries it provided, she differed from them in deciding how to put those advantages to use. Part of her independence developed after her mother, Catherine Ann Johnson Devereux, died in 1836 from consumption. According to a deathbed witness, among Mrs. Devereux's last words were concerns for the burden she left her eldest daughter: "what a charge Frances, what a charge you will have!" Frances, in fact, regarded her younger siblings as her "children," even after her own marriage.[9] Her father, who doubtless felt all his children needed an actual mother, selected an extremely wealthy partner within a year of his first wife's death. He married Ann Mary Maitland of New York in 1837, much to his children's dismay. Sister Sophia mentioned her "chilled & unhappy girlhood," while sister Elizabeth asserted, "Oh! if our Mother had only been spared to us how different would have been the lives of every one of her children! I know . . . all of our lives would have been so different had we had her to go to to tell our troubles & get from her such loving good advice & counsel! Yes we have all needed her, every one has suffered for the want of her love." Mary wrote her former tutor years later that the Roanoke plantations had proved a curse rather than a blessing because they had enticed the Maitlands into accepting her father's marriage proposal.[10]

Mary, living within a strained household, learned self-reliance. She described

MARY BAYARD CLARKE, C. LATE 1860S

from a tintype, in the heyday of her journalism career.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

her girlhood as "that sad and dreary time." For someone who loved reading and writing, she probably found her tutor's instruction a welcome escape. She and her sisters enjoyed a rigorous series of studies that mirrored those of their brother who attended Yale. North Carolina planter families typically provided a basic education for their daughters, sending them to private female academies in the region or hiring tutors to instruct them in a general curriculum and social skills in preparation for marriage.[11] Although Mary's motivation must be teased from fragmentary evidence, she benefited from more advanced studies under a well-educated woman and from her determination to overcome southern society's proscriptions on independent female behavior.[12] It is likely her father's precipitous second marriage strengthened Mary's resolve to live life on her own terms. When she decided to marry, she selected someone for love and companionship rather than wealth, much to her father's dismay.

As a young belle in Raleigh, Mary met distinguished writers and artists from across the state who spurred her literary ambitions. She favored city living because of the greater cultural and professional opportunities offered there. One anonymous admirer described her as "intellectual, and remarkable, . . . [S]he was the acknowledged queen of society in the circle in which she moved."[13] Her poems, read among family and friends, received favorable comment, but she wanted her work to appear in print. In 1843 she met William J. Clarke at the wedding of mutual friends.[14] Clarke, a lawyer, Democrat, and graduate of the University of North Carolina, shared her interest in poetry and admired her compositions, but he was the son of a Raleigh merchant rather than a member of the planter class.

Her father, Thomas Pollock Devereux, a prominent Whig, remained unenthusiastic about Clarke as a potential son-in-law. Devereux epitomized political, economic, and social leadership in the state. He viewed warily anyone who might not succeed in providing for his daughter.[15] Clarke had neither wealth nor political influence. Devereux initially refused to let his daughter wed him. His concern grew when Clarke left to fight in the Mexican War.[16] Devereux perhaps worried about his daughter's becoming a young widow if Clarke should die in battle. Mary, clearly unhappy with her father's decision, was sent to her aunt's home in Louisiana, where she waited for her father's change of heart as well as for William's return. Again, her poems reveal much about that long year before she received her father's grudging consent to the union. In her manuscript letter book, where she frequently wrote her poetry while traveling, she recorded, "Thy rebellion needs correction, Meekly bow beneath the rod," in the poem "Lafouche August 11th 1847." In "I've Been Thinking" she described the kindness of the aunt who "dried my bitterest tears" and the fact that when she and

William finally married in 1848, "My Father was not there." After Clarke returned from the Mexican War, the couple wed in Louisiana in a ceremony performed by her uncle, Episcopal bishop Leonidas Polk, before the two returned to North Carolina.[17]

Mary Clarke met social expectations by marrying and bearing four children between 1849 and 1858, but she also built her career.[18] She worked with other poets to gather and publish the first compilation of North Carolina poetry, *Wood-Notes, or Carolina Carols: A Collection of North Carolina Poetry*, published in 1854.[19] By the age of twenty-six, she had established her credentials as a writer. After entering the world of publishing, she carefully pursued a career in writing, which was deemed acceptable for women because it could be done in the home and seemed not to threaten traditional southern values. Until 1869 Mary published under pseudonyms to mask her identity, a common practice for nineteenth-century American authors, male or female.[20] This maintained privacy and preserved the illusion that writing was done out of love rather than economic necessity.[21] Business transactions, including the transmission of money, also could be conducted via correspondence rather than in person, if necessary to "protect" ladies from the world of commerce. Not that Mary shrank from personally visiting publishers' offices to conduct business in later years. She relished her visits to publishing firms in various cities to meet with editors and writers.

At first Clarke wrote from personal desire rather than financial necessity, composing poems and translating French poetry while gaining confidence in her work. Mary refined her technique and learned to cultivate editors she felt best matched her writing or political views. After she finished *Wood-Notes*, Mary capitalized on its success by expanding her writing into periodical literature. Deploying her skills as a southern lady, she sought help from John Reuben Thompson, owner and editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. She sent him a copy of *Wood-Notes* and asked for advice on having a series of travel columns published. Mary informed him she had an offer from a northern editor to write for his paper but confessed, "I am so ignorant in such affairs that I know not whether the offer is a good one or not." She then proposed to write for the *Messenger* instead, being "entirely Southern in my feelings and opinions" and preferring to contribute "to some periodical in our part of the Union."[22] Clarke knew how to appeal to southern editors. She secured the commission, and four articles appeared in the *Messenger* in 1855.[23]

Husband William remained devoted to his wife and supported her writing career. Within their untraditional marriage, Mary decided how to spend her earnings, an unusual circumstance given that married women, by law, could

not own property. Husbands legally controlled family wealth unless a marriage contract granted a woman specific exceptions. The Clarkes did not have such a contract, but Mary managed her income. At first she purchased items she wanted; later her earnings supported her family and the war effort.[24] William depended on his wife's income and rarely questioned his wife's career.[25]

The Clarkes' Raleigh residency ended in 1855 because of William's lack of job prospects. He proved a hapless provider throughout much of their marriage, and debts and lack of cash troubled the family wherever they lived.[26] They moved first to Cuba and then by 1856 to San Antonio, Texas. The stated reason for their moves was Mary's "delicate" health, although this avid horsewoman evinced little invalidism while exploring Havana or the Texas countryside. Moving far from family and friends with three children marked a turning point for both Clarkes. William studied for the Texas bar and explored business opportunities, believing his military experience during the Mexican War would open doors in Texas. His lack of success brought disillusionment in two short years.

San Antonio's multiethnic culture, army garrison, pleasant climate, and congenial social life initially delighted Mary. She adapted to Texas life and tackled chores in ways new to her: ironing, gardening, combatting locusts, learning to hire white and free-black servants, and fending off a robber when alone at night during one of William's absences. By 1858, however, her husband's financial difficulties forced Mary to deal with pressing financial problems while assessing William's business sense. Mary, at a defining crisis in her marriage, learned to trust her judgment over William's. It was a critical lesson to learn.

William Clarke accepted a nonsalaried position with a fledgling railroad concern in San Antonio. He departed for New York City to secure investors for the railroad company and remained there for months. He left his pregnant wife without funds, three children to feed, and a home to maintain. Desperate for money, she reluctantly approached William's business partners for funds to meet her immediate needs, but they denied her request. She wrote her father for help. Devereux agreed to provide funds solely for her and for the children's benefit, but it took time for the cash to reach Texas. At one point she taught in a local school to make ends meet.[27] Clarke also wrote articles for various papers to bring in needed income.[28] William sympathized in a letter with the "idol of my soul" for "enduring such things" but added "like an egg I have been so long in hot water that I have become hardened" to his wife's plight.[29]

His "brave wife" also had hardened. No longer reliant on her husband to run things, Mary took charge of her family's well-being and turned to her writing. Though Mary struggled in dealing with financial hardships, she relished her freedom and publishing successes. She began to write about political turmoil

in San Antonio preceding secession. Her marriage revived, too, once William returned and joined the local militia. He participated in seizing the Federal arsenal in San Antonio in February 1861, which Mary described for a New York paper as a firm supporter of the secession movement.[30]

William Clarke returned to North Carolina to join the Confederate army, where he became colonel of the Fourteenth Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, later the Twenty-Fourth Regiment, North Carolina Troops. Relieved to be back in military service, he wrote Mary to stay in San Antonio with the children, but the entire family soon reunited in Raleigh.[31] Having endured poverty and separation once, Mary had no intention of rearing four children alone during wartime. She left their one slave in Texas to guard their possessions and traveled with her children and Jane Espy, a free black woman who worked for the family.[32]

Mary and her children spent the war years moving among various family members' homes, living in boardinghouses, and visiting her husband's regiment in Virginia. She worried about her husband's safety, but she took pride in his military service. She also renewed former friendships, wrote, gathered supplies for the troops, and guided her children's schooling and social development.[33] Eager to support the war, Mary wrote poems about the bravery of southern troops and women on the home front, many of which were published individually or compiled into collections.[34] Her most popular poems—"The Battle of Manassas," "The Rebel Sock," and "Annie Carter Lee"—described a military victory, the patriotism of southern women, and the death of military hero Robert E. Lee's daughter, respectively. "The Rebel Sock" praised southern women's resourcefulness while belittling the enemy. It depicted a southern "Grandmama" who outwitted Union troops sent to seize goods intended for Confederate soldiers. Satirically describing the Federal "hero" with his "little cap . . . on his head, His sword . . . in his hand," Clarke mocked his seizure of one rebel sock while he foolishly let the old lady keep the ball of yarn and her knitting needles to use again for the cause.[35]

Clarke was dedicated to the Confederacy. She cared for her husband when he was badly wounded in 1864 and, after his capture and imprisonment in 1865, worked for pay as a clerk in a military office shortly before Raleigh fell to Union forces. Her admiration for Confederate leaders and their policies did not always match her husband's views. He resented the Confederate policy granting planters exemptions from military service. William, responding to Mary in 1863 about a complaint made by her stepmother concerning Clarke's finances, observed that he was one of the few members of the family actually fighting to protect Devereux property. Echoing the discontent of many poor or mid-

dling North Carolinians who had to serve, he added, "Look around and see how few . . . of your acquaintance are facing danger and enduring privations. The poor men are fighting for the rich, *and they know it*, and . . . if the men in elevated positions do not pursue a more conciliatory course, and recognise the fact that those placed under them have rights and feelings, there will be a terrible explosion . . . and the most disastrous consequences will ensue."[36] The philosophical gap between William and the Devereux family foreshadowed how postwar politics—dominated by Republicans on one hand and the Conservative Party's former planter elite on the other—would influence family fortunes.

When Raleigh surrendered to Sherman's troops in April 1865, Mary and part of the family were living with her sister Frances Miller.[37] With William in prison, Mary wrote and edited for money, while her sons earned incomes selling newspapers and groceries to Union soldiers. Her newspaper articles written between 1865 and 1867—often printed in northern papers to persuade readers that slavery had been benevolent and that former Confederates presented no threat to Reconstruction—addressed subjects she selected or that were suggested to her by Conservatives such as former Confederate governor Zebulon B. Vance.

Although Mary aligned herself politically with former planters who formed the Conservative Party that opposed Reconstruction and political and social equality for African Americans, she faced hostility from members of her extended family who disapproved of her assertiveness and interactions with Union officers in Raleigh. Clarke frequently met with northern officers to gather facts for her articles and because she enjoyed the discussions. Frances Miller and other family members bluntly told Mary to stop consulting with Union officers or they would tell her father that he "must take you under his eye till you could be restored to the protection of your husband."[38]

William, imprisoned at Fort Delaware, must have pondered his future. He wanted to return to Texas but knew Mary preferred North Carolina. He wrote from prison to ask her opinion but also to urge that, "being upon the ground [in Texas], when business opens, I should occupy quite a favorable position. . . . What does your *judgment* say to this?"[39] The Clarkes stayed in North Carolina after William's release from prison on July 24, 1865, suggesting Mary's opinions counted heavily in family decisions.

Attempts by her family to stop her professional pursuits strengthened Mary's determination to continue. She wanted to open new avenues of employment for women. She believed that writing, journalism—where North Carolina women should be encouraged "to put pen to paper for publication"—and office work should be options for them.[40] Mary's interactions with military and political leaders she met before and after the Civil War—Robert E. Lee, Albert Sydney

Johnston, Louis T. Wigfall, Zebulon B. Vance, President Andrew Johnson, and William Graham—frequently led to published accounts. She also used contacts among fellow writers—such as Emily Mason, Margaret Junkin Preston, Frances Downing, and Lillie Devereux Blake—to promote her work. Eventually, she traveled to Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and other venues to gather material for articles.

In addition to her writing assignments, Clarke joined other civic-minded Raleigh women to pressure North Carolina legislators to pass "a bill appropriating fifteen hundred dollars to the Ladies Memorial Association" to honor the Confederate dead. After leaving the State House in February 1867 following passage of the bill, Clarke encountered Abby House, a North Carolina yeoman-class woman from Franklin County who had remarkable war stories to tell. House approached Mary about recording House's "'sperience of the war."[41] Two strong women decided they could bridge their social and class differences to capture a unique Tar Heel story.

"Local color" writing flourished in late nineteenth-century America, and Clarke's depiction of Abby House illustrated her skill with the literary genre.[42] Clarke wrote two acclaimed articles introducing "Aunt Abby, the Irrepressible" to southern readers in the *Land We Love*, a Charlotte publication. She worked to reproduce House's vernacular speech patterns in her articles to reveal House as a forceful, honest, if illiterate woman. Clarke portrayed House's admiration of Confederate leaders she met during the war together with her unswerving devotion to southern soldiers. A recent analysis of the Aunt Abby articles and of the antiwar sentiment among a large segment of the state's yeoman class suggests that Clarke's portrayal of Aunt Abby as uncritically devoted to Confederate leaders "means that Clarke's account should be seen as deliberately sanitized" to support Conservative views of the war and to suppress yeoman discontent.[43] The interviews with Aunt Abby also sparked Clarke's fertile imagination with the idea for a second series of articles she intended for a completely different purpose.

Clarke's growing anger over Reconstruction policies and the empowerment of African Americans resulted in her Betsey Bittersweet series, which appeared in 1867 and 1868. She wrote in the guise of a semiliterate North Carolina farmwoman, attacking blacks and attributing to the yeoman class a form of racism she derived from her planter antecedents. As one historian has noted, "elite figures proved to be the instigators of racial violence throughout the period."[44]

Clarke published the Bittersweet articles in several different newspapers, although the editor of the *Land We Love* rejected them as "too rebellious."[45] They began in a lighthearted manner, emulating the mangled speech and humor of

a poorly educated woman using domestic issues such as washing and drying clothes to discuss southern loyalty, race, Yankees, and Reconstruction issues. The tone of the Bittersweet articles changed, however, as Radical Reconstruction in North Carolina progressed. The new state constitution of 1868 secured votes for African American men a full two years before passage of the Fifteenth Amendment enfranchised black men nationally. The Bittersweet articles became, in the words of historian Jane Turner Censer, "a screed against African American citizenship and autonomy."[46]

Clarke employed her pen as a weapon to support southern conservatism from 1865 until mid-1868. She wrote articles such as "GENERAL SHERMAN IN RALEIGH," "The South Expects Every Woman to Do Her Duty," and "General Kilpatrick and Reconstruction." In the latter she asserted: "The people of this State will bear with equanimity the losses, both pecuniary and political, consequent upon the war. . . . The feeling of the people is: take away the military, let us have a State Government, and we will give up everything, . . . but don't force the negro . . . upon us." She heard the debates at the state's Constitutional Convention and reported them to readers, contrasting the "addled" work of Republicans to the work of the "body of delegates [Conservatives], representing the respectable portion of the people of North Carolina."[47] While other southern women writers were turning to romantic novels or stories, Clarke covered political issues and politicians in newspapers. She received a steady income, too. William still suffered from war wounds and some sort of mental disability after the war.[48] Mary hoped that her support for Conservatives, many of whom were family and friends, would lead to political positions for her husband and sons. Clarke must have been shocked when William joined the Republican Party in mid-1868. Unhappy with increasing violence used by Conservatives against the freedmen and Republicans and receiving little political encouragement from former planters, William stood by his oath of allegiance to the United States. Socially ostracized as scalawags by former friends as well as family, the Clarkes moved to New Bern to build a new life. William received an appointment from Governor William Woods Holden in 1871 to fill a vacancy as a superior court judge, but the 1874 Republican convention did not support his candidacy for reelection.[49] No documentation of Mary Bayard Clarke's response to William's decision remains, but she never wrote articles in support of Republican politics, and she left the state during elections, noting that "all the old bitterness rises up . . . and Republicans here need expect no mercy socially."[50]

Despite private misgivings, Mary was pleased with Republicans' acceptance of salaried jobs for women. She took a position with Judge Edwin G. Reade, who served on the state's supreme court. Republicans preferred women to men

as clerks because they could pay them lower wages, but any income helped women seeking respectable work. Also, Republicans did not consider those who worked as socially inferior. Reade commended Mary's career. "Labor . . . is all that makes the world better for one's having lived in it," he said. "The world has its claim upon virtue, strength & intellect . . . you are blessed with these beyond the common lot. Be proud of them. Use them."[51] Mary had enjoyed her employment as a military clerk during the war, and there was nothing different about working as a clerk for Reade.[52] In one passage, written in 1868, about her clerkship, Clarke observed: "If I could be the means of opening such a field of labor for our women I would be only too happy to do it, that my position was such that I could take the initiative and people who at first would say that it was a piece of my excentricity and independance would in a few weeks be seeking places."[53] She then set her sights on becoming the first woman librarian for the state's supreme court. Income from this job would pay for her daughter's tuition at a private school in Baltimore.[54]

Clarke accepted office work, though a married woman and mother, because she felt the war had changed the South and women's roles in society.[55] In addition, she had the approval of her husband, she already worked as an author and editor, and she believed her social prominence mitigated criticism. Perhaps southern society would have agreed if her husband had not been a Republican. His politics, coupled with what critics viewed as her independence, proved insurmountable.[56] Family members thwarted Mary's efforts for the librarianship, embarrassing her and Judge Reade.[57] A little over a decade later, Mary's editorials in the *Signal* endorsing employment and equal pay for women still elicited critical responses from readers, one of whom accused Clarke of being an "advocate" for "Woman's Rights," intent on "upsetting the established order of our dear old conservative State." Clarke replied, "The war did that twenty years ago, and it has never settled itself again. What would have been said in 1859, if the daughters of our most prominent men had taken positions as clerks in the capitol . . . just as their brothers might have done? Metaphorically speaking, the roof of the State House would have been lifted. Yet their grand-daughters have done it with perfect propriety."[58]

Clarke also pursued journalism, writing for local and national papers, traveling to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere as stories required. Her work was widely published and enjoyed by readers. After the war she served as an editor, first with *Southern Field and Fireside* in Raleigh from 1865 to 1866, when a disagreement with the publishers over one of her stories induced her to leave. She then served as an editor of *Literary Pastimes* in Richmond from 1868 until it merged with the *Baltimorean* in 1872. In 1876 she journeyed to New

York to meet editors at "Harpers where I was made much of, saw the Editor of the Weekly and talked extensively, then went and lunched at the Tribune office with Bayard Taylor, a fat, red faced, sea-captain-looking poet! . . . Spent an hour very pleasantly."[59] She wrote for periodicals and newspapers including the *New Orleans Picayune*, *New York Herald*, *Land We Love*, *Appleton's Journal* (New York), *Old Guard* (New York), *Sunny South* (Atlanta), *Inland Monthly Magazine* (Chicago), *Southern Home Journal* (Baltimore), and others.

In 1866 she published a second volume of poetry, *Mosses from a Rolling Stone; or, Idle Moments of a Busy Woman*, which she marketed vigorously after settling copyright issues with the publisher.[60] In 1871 *Clytie and Zenobia; or the Lily and the Palm, a Poem* was published by E. P. Dutton and Company of New York. Considering the volume and variety of work Clarke produced, she became one of the foremost women writers of the region. Still, Cornelia Phillips Spencer, author of *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* (1866), is better remembered by North Carolinians because Conservatives in the state approved her politics and honored her memory. Clarke wrote well, but her legacy suffered, largely because of her support of women's right to work and of equal pay as well as William's membership in the Republican Party.

Clarke's life experiences reshaped her intellectual development. The material she produced starting in the late 1860s differed significantly from what she wrote in the 1850s and during the war years. Poetry still appealed to her, but she spent more time writing on social issues. Mary wanted to help other women in the state who were seeking employment. She believed women could identify jobs they wanted to pursue if given the right education and encouragement. She challenged southern resistance to women's working by example and in published essays, stating: "Even those who are bitterly opposed to 'Woman's Rights' and 'Woman's Suffrage,' . . . are obliged to admit that there are many more women who must support themselves than are required to fill the ranks of teachers, seamstresses and boardinghouse keepers. . . . Every day opens wider the gate that admits woman to the green pastures of business—a gate whose bars have been all the more slowly withdrawn because they were bars of prejudices—which were supposed to be principles."[61] Her views on work and pay for women were advanced for a southerner, leading her to write in 1877, "Found schools, ye rich men, where your daughters can be trained to business, just as you establish institutions where they may be taught music and dancing, drawing and painting, French and German."[62]

Access to work outside the home—as writers, teachers, clerks, and later as librarians—constituted a change for elite southern women after the war.[63] A growing number of North Carolina women—Frances Christine Fisher Tiernan,

Maria Louise Pool, Frances Eliza Hodgson Burnett, Mary Noailles Murfree, and more—did succeed as professional writers, producing novels, stories, and newspaper essays for a growing readership.[64] Clarke implored North Carolinians to consider writing and the field of journalism—encompassing editors, printers, reporters, and proofreaders—as sources of income for women. Writing in 1877, she described a new school of journalism for women founded in Chicago, which she visited during an extended stay in that city. She urged "Southern gentlemen of means" to support it and send women from their localities as pupils "opening another field for woman's labor in the South, where as yet there are so few occupations in which she can find employment either for her head or her hands."[65]

Clarke's travels in the North after the war introduced her to educated women and men who influenced her on the need to expand women's opportunities, although she never thought women should vote. One article she wrote compared northern and southern women and suggested women of the two regions could learn much from each other.[66] She investigated businesses owned by women. She studied the work environment of teachers, an increasing number of whom were women, their hours and pay scales, and decided as early as 1883 that women should serve on school boards. Women did not have the vote at this time, and school boards were considered political positions.[67] Clarke, echoing those who believed civic welfare came under the purview of women, insisted they should voice their concerns: "Women should certainly open their mouths and speak their sentiments. . . . It is as much in behalf of the over worked teacher as the scholar that women should speak." She went on, "If every perfect home should, to be so, have a father and a mother, so it seems to me every School Board of Trustees should be half of them women when the schools are for girls as well as boys."[68]

Clarke recognized that many women after the war needed to support themselves and asserted in 1881 "the right of every woman who works for payment, to receive as good treatment in a business point of view, as if she were a man." She reassured readers this was as close to woman's rights as she was willing to go, but she dismissed arguments that business would harm women, observing "all women are not wives, and many who are, never become mothers."[69] Nor was she "willing to admit that the duties of the domestic relations are necessarily not well performed by a woman of business." Instead, Mary maintained "that a woman . . . has a brain as well as a heart, and while home duties fill the one, the other often cries loudly and vainly for sustenance."[70]

Political animosities intensified in North Carolina during the late 1880s and 1890s as Democrats, formerly the Conservative Party, mounted a vicious white

supremacy campaign to deny black men the vote. Part of their rhetoric stressed the need to protect white women from black men. The image of self-reliant women who performed ably during and after the war dimmed.[71] White women who worked outside the home or who organized civic and patriotic societies during the 1880s believed the propaganda and accepted the racial and gender conventions that kept them, as well as black men and women, subordinate.[72] By the 1890s white men celebrated the images of "ornamental" southern belles and dutiful wives rather than independent, assertive women.[73] The groundwork laid by southern women such as Mary Bayard Clarke for women's greater independence and a voice in public affairs began to erode.[74]

The 1880s also brought serious health issues to the Clarke family. William became dependent on alcohol, which adversely affected his political career and his marriage. Mary wrote her husband in January 1880, "I cannot tell you how heart sick it made me when I saw you were taking whiskey before breakfast, and realized how excessively irritable you had grown; not only to me—for I have become accustomed to that—, but to every-one who approaches you."[75] Finances worsened, too, when her daughter's husband died in 1880. The Clarkes housed their daughter and two grandchildren in their New Bern home, but Mary worried about her daughter's future.

Mary suffered a stroke in 1883 that left her weakened and partially paralyzed. She continued to read and write book reviews, but money worries increased because producing lengthy articles was now beyond her. She realized that her widowed daughter and grandchildren needed a secure financial future. Clarke began to review eligible bachelors in New Bern. Her will, written in 1875, left the family home to her daughter.

William died on January 23, 1886, after a long illness. Mary nursed him through this and then arranged their son Willie's wedding in February. She suffered a second stroke in March. Clarke witnessed her daughter's second marriage from her bedside, then died on March 31, 1886.

Mary Bayard Clarke did not conform to southern society's norms. She chose her own path, both in her personal life and her professional career. While she cherished her family, her desire to write professionally led her to challenge the domestic role expected of most southern women of her class. She encouraged other southern women to step into a wider world of commerce and independence, and she pushed for social acceptance of any woman's right to work regardless of marital status. For a brief period during Reconstruction, she advocated new roles for women in society and enacted them by her own example. Despite conservative forces that were reasserting antebellum expectations

toward women, race, and class, Mary Bayard Clarke refused to compromise her intellectual and professional freedom.

NOTES

1. Terrell Armistead Crow and Mary Moulton Barden, eds., *Live Your Own Life: The Family Papers of Mary Bayard Clarke, 1854–1886* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 329–30. The papers used for this essay and the previously cited book are housed in various repositories and private collections in North Carolina. Mary Moulton Barden, a resident of New Bern and Mary Bayard Clarke's great-granddaughter, owns many of the papers. Additional manuscripts are held by other descendants or have been donated to the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University in Durham, East Carolina University in Greenville, and the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh. These papers include correspondence from Mary Bayard Clarke's extended family, original poetry, numerous newspaper clippings, her letter book, marginalia, photographs, and diaries, including her sister Catherine Devereux Edmondston's journal.

2. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxxiii, xxxvii.

3. Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton, eds., *"Journal of a Secesh Lady": The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860–1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1979), 282 (hereafter cited as *Edmondston Diary*). No letters between the two sisters exist discussing Mary Bayard's publishing career. However, Kate's criticism of women writers clearly reflected her and her father's views on having a woman in their family step outside the proscribed domestic role assigned to southern planter women.

4. *Edmondston Diary*, xix–xxi, xxxiv–xxxvi.

5. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 11.

6. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 7, 31–33; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 28, 30, 35.

7. Anastasia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 7–8; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 27.

8. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 14n3, 38–40; Mary Devereux to Frances Devereux Miller, December 6, 1837, January 3, 1838, Wootten, Moulton, and Clarke Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Joseph G. Cogswell to Frances Miller, March 19, 1861, Mrs. Graham A. Barden Jr. Collection, New Bern, N.C.

9. On the envelopes of two letters she received from her sister Mary in 1837 and 1838, she mentioned she had saved the letters because of her "love & interest in my dear Children" (Wootten, Moulton, Clarke Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection).

10. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxx, livn8, lvn29, 194–95.

11. Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 302–3, 305; Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 16–17.

12. One historian has noted that some members of the two youngest generations of antebellum

North Carolina women were "interested less in patriarchy and more in expanded roles for women" (Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 277).

13. L. P. H., "La Tenella," *Home Journal* (New York), undated clipping (c. 1867), Mary Bayard Clarke Scrapbook 1, Barden Collection.

14. Eliza Tarbox, a Connecticut native and a good friend of Mary's deceased mother, remained in Raleigh following Catherine Devereux's death to help look after the motherless children for a time. Eliza later married Raleigh merchant John Primrose, one of William J. Clarke's closest friends. William served as bondsman for Primrose's marriage. Mary met William for the first time at the wedding, held on October 19, 1843. See *Raleigh Register*, October 24, 1843; Wake County Marriage Bonds, John Primrose and Eliza Tarbox, October 18, 1843, North Carolina State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, N.C.; William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 5:147; Frances Martin Finnerty Collection, New Bern, N.C. Information about the Tarbox–Primrose wedding courtesy of Chris Meekins, North Carolina State Archives.

15. Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 3–5.

16. Clarke served with distinction during the war and was badly wounded at the Battle of National Bridge. He was mustered out of service on July 25, 1848. See Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, lvin34.

17. Clarke letter book, Barden Collection; Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxxi–xxxii.

18. Frank was born in 1849, William (Willie) in 1850, and Mary (Mai) in 1852, all in Raleigh. The last child, Thomas (Tom), was born in San Antonio in 1858. See Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxxiv–xxxv.

19. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 2n2.

20. Ibid., xxx. Before her father's death in 1869, Clarke used the pseudonyms Tenella or Stuart Leigh, or she published anonymously. After 1869 Clarke published under her own name.

21. Susan Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 13–14, 118–19, 159–60, 162.

22. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 1, 2n1. In letters to editor George Bagby she emphasized that as a lady she needed to protect her privacy through the use of a pseudonym. She boasted that her social circle, which extended "from Boston to Brownsville one way, and from Cuba to Chicago the other," knew her as well "by the name of Tenella as of Mrs Clarke." However, "the newspapers and public generally, have nothing to do with the latter personage." Mary added, "My father . . . objects to my writing for publication either with or without a nom de plume, and if I had no feeling on the subject myself, I should keep my name out of print simply because it is disagreeable to him to see it there." Clarke implied she remained a dutiful daughter, when in fact she refused to obey her father's wishes to cease publishing entirely. See Mary Bayard Clarke to Dr. Bagby, December 16, 1860; April 8 [1861], Bagby Family Papers, 1824–1960 (Mss1 B1463 b), Section 4, Virginia Historical Society (VHS). For further discussion of women writers and publishers, see Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business*, 30–46.

23. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 2n4.

24. Ibid., 131, 192n1, lxiin101, 339. Mary purchased a diamond ring with her proceeds and gave funds to state military hospitals. Money from *Mosses from a Rolling Stone* supported the Stonewall Jackson cemetery in Virginia. She also used her income to feed, clothe, and educate her children. Later, she purchased a home in New Bern.

25. William expressed concerns about Mary's independent thinking in the 1870s and deplored her professional involvement with "the realists and pantheists of the North." He tried to return Mary to the "efficacy of prayer," but in 1878 she wrote a Chicago friend: "I have quietly rejected the whole fabric of Inspiration, the immaculate Conception, the Trinity, and a personal God as one phase of religion which I have passed and cannot go back to." William ceased to challenge Mary's work and colleagues thereafter. See Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 339, 390.

26. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxxii–xxxiii, xxxvi–xxxvii, xlvii, l.

27. Ibid., xxxvii.

28. Mary wrote an editor early in 1861 that she had been writing for three papers, not under her signature, all of which paid well for her prose articles. See Mary Bayard Clarke to Dr. Bagby, March 12, 1861, Bagby Papers, VHS.

29. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xxxvii.

30. Ibid., 58–63, 64.

31. Ibid., xxxix–xl.

32. Ibid., xli, 82–83.

33. Ibid., 161, 166–68, 232.

34. Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 166–67, in which Clarke is misidentified as Amy Clarke. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, xlii.

35. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 133–36; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 16–17.

36. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 143–44. For a complete discussion of North Carolina's growing disillusionment with the Confederacy and the assertion of political rights by North Carolina's common folk, see Escott, *Many Excellent People*.

37. Frank, her eldest son, had joined the Confederate navy and did not return to Raleigh until several weeks later. Clarke wrote three accounts, which appeared serially in 1866 in the *Old Guard* (New York), describing how Raleigh women reacted to Sherman's occupation of Raleigh. The first is reproduced in Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 206–13.

38. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 182–84, 204–6. Mary left Frances's home and moved to a boardinghouse to continue her work unhindered by her angry family.

39. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 181.

40. Ibid., 399–400. Clarke wrote this in an article published March 3, 1880, for Raleigh's Republican newspaper the *Signal*. Clarke's outlook found acceptance with many North Carolina women of the postbellum years who had to earn their own way. See Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 2–3, 5, 6, 60, 64–67.

41. Mary Bayard Clarke, "Aunt Abby the Irrepressible: A Sketch from Life by Mary Bayard Clarke," *The Land We Love* 3, no. 1 (1867): 63.

42. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 235–36, 241; Jane Turner Censer, "Mary Bayard Clarke's Plain-Folk Humor: Writing Women into the Literature and Politics of Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 2 (2010): 243.

43. Censer, "Mary Bayard Clarke's Plain-Folk Humor," 249, 252.

44. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, xviii.

45. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 242.

46. Censer, "Mary Bayard Clarke's Plain-Folk Humor," 254–59.

47. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*: "GENERAL SHERMAN IN RALEIGH," 206–13, "THE SOUTH EXPECTS EVERY WOMAN TO DO HER DUTY," 222–28, "General Kilpatrick and Reconstruction," 187–90, Betsey Bittersweet article, "*Dear Mister Home Journal of the South*," 250–52, "For the Journal of Commerce," 255–57.

48. In an 1866 letter to her son Frank, Mary revealed that William suffered a severe reaction to the war and his imprisonment. She explained that "he has never been himself since he was in prison for more than a little while, I dont mean that he is out of his mind but his mind is weakened and he is very irritable." She added that she felt Frank was old enough to "help me hide it from the world and the other children as long as possible" (Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 233).

49. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 1:381–82.

50. Ibid., 385.

51. Ibid., 270.

52. Ibid., 174.

53. Ibid., 266–67.

54. Ibid., xxvii.

55. Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 153–54.

56. Feminism remained unpopular in North Carolina well into the twentieth century. Clarke's support of employment for women bothered many, who referred to her "peculiar views." See Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 11; Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 402–3.

57. See in particular the correspondence between Frances Devereux Miller, Mary Bayard Clarke, Edwin G. Reade, and William J. Clarke during this period: Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 268–71, 272–74, 279–80, 282–87, 288–90, 290–92.

58. Mary Bayard Clarke, "Woman's Work," *Raleigh Signal*, February 18, 1880.

59. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 352. In an 1877 article Clarke noted the difference between northern society's acceptance of working women, where "she has not to brace herself against public opinion, and is not made to feel that she is regarded by others as having socially lowered herself," with the South's ridicule of a working woman "until she has become a success" (374).

60. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 195–96.

61. Ibid., 365.

62. Ibid., 366.

63. Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 88, 153.

64. Ibid., 216–24.

65. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 168.

66. Ibid., 372–75.

67. Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 158–63.

68. "A Women, Amen!" *Raleigh Farmer and Mechanic*, May 23, 1883.

69. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 409.

70. Ibid., 365–66.

71. Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 100–103, 111–12, 116.

72. Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 12–14, 19–23, 28, 53, 62, 67–68; Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 147.

73. Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 279–80.

74. Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 35–41.

75. Crow and Barden, *Live Your Own Life*, 198.

Anna Julia Cooper

Black Feminist Scholar, Educator, and Activist

VIVIAN M. MAY

Anna Julia Cooper was born into slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1858 and passed away in her Washington, D.C., home in 1964 at age 105. An internationally known black feminist educator, scholar, and activist, she is remembered for demonstrating how the politics of race, gender, nation, and empire intersect. Rather than advocate for one form of civil rights as primary (e.g., racial *or* gender equality), she argued for models of social change that addressed many forms of inequality together. For a full understanding of Cooper's views, the effect of growing up in Raleigh, first in slavery on the Haywood plantation and then after emancipation, should not be underestimated. Region was central to her identity, and it influenced her scholarly and political analyses. In Raleigh she began to question existing reality and to think critically about the world around her. There, she first developed her sense of political consciousness, nourished her intellectual yearnings, and embarked on a teaching career that spanned more than seventy years. In her later scholarship, Cooper emphasized the value of knowledge gained from lived experience and underscored that her own experiences as a black North Carolinian woman added nuance to her ideas and insights.[1]

More than simply being proud of her regional identity, Cooper argued that thinking about the South was pivotal to everyone's ability to understand the nation's larger issues, past and present. Moreover, examining American history or politics without knowing about life in the South from a black woman's point of view was narrow-minded. For instance, in her 1893 speech before the Congress of Representative Women at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Cooper reminded her audience, "I speak for the colored women of the South because it is there that the millions of blacks in this country have watered the soil with blood and tears, and it is there too that the colored woman of America

has made her characteristic history, and there her destiny is evolving."[2] She neither presented a romantic vision of black life in the South nor depicted black southern experiences as defined solely by tragedy. She named instances of terror and violation—from lynching to rape, chain gangs to tenant farming—but did not approach slavery, racism, or sexism as all-encompassing systems.[3] Instead, she wanted to trace the inner "divine Spark" or "urge-cell"—sites of internal resistance and possibility even in the context of extreme exploitation.[4] This was important to her, personally and intellectually, because she believed the potential for change was always present and could be realized if people could begin to question everyday assumptions and not accept things as they are.

Cooper was born Anna (Annie) Julia Haywood in 1858, daughter of Hannah Stanley (Haywood) (1817–99), who was enslaved. It seems that her "father," in name only, was Dr. Fabius J. Haywood, her mother's master.[5] Cooper indicated that her mother's relations with Haywood were not consensual. Seeing how race exploitation and gender domination were intertwined in her mother's life shaped Cooper's worldview. By alluding to some of slavery's gender-specific aspects of exploitation, learned from her mother and from other enslaved people, Cooper addressed the notion that slavery was "less harsh" in some parts of the South and introduced gender as integral to the history and analysis of racialized experience.[6] As she later argued, all forms of chattel slavery are corrupt and indefensible. Moreover, attempts to measure suffering or to quantify oppression demonstrated faulty logic.[7] Reflecting on her mother's efforts and connecting those memories to observations about how African Americans across the South struggled, Cooper described how "drudging toil" combined with grinding, widespread "poverty and destitution" deeply affected all African Americans. For instance, they had difficulty accumulating capital or owning property. Trying to do so was "like gathering water in a sieve." African Americans had insufficient nourishment for mind and body, engaged in backbreaking, underpaid labor, and experienced higher morbidity and mortality rates than whites.[8]

Cooper had two older brothers in Raleigh: Rufus and Andrew Haywood.[9] Rufus was born around 1836, worked as a carpenter and musician, and married a woman named Nancy. Andrew, born in 1848, was also a musician, a bricklayer by profession, and a soldier in the Spanish American War. Andrew married Jane Henderson, who worked as a cook.[10] Since her brothers were older, Cooper grew up with her mother, who worked as a domestic and a nurse. After emancipation in 1865 she worked as a domestic in Raleigh.[11] Cooper recalled that her mother made many sacrifices so that she could go to school.[12] Memories of her mother's labors and sacrifices shaped Cooper's ideas about education. She advocated for equal access to schooling and for a well-rounded curriculum rather than

ANNA J. COOPER, OBERLIN COLLEGE CLASS OF 1884

Courtesy of Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

manual education for some and liberal arts education for others. She saw access to education for all people, including the poor and disenfranchised, as key to ending structural inequalities. Cooper later suggested that reparations for slavery could, in part, take the form of adequate funding for black education.[13]

From a young age, Cooper was steadfast in her pursuit of an education, which started at St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh. There, her ideas about education were first fostered. In January 1868 she was one of two girls to enroll in its first class. Founded by the Freedmen's Bureau and the Episcopal Church, it offered a liberal arts curriculum. Cooper was granted a scholarship, and at around age ten she began working as a tutor to support her schooling. She recalled, "When hardly more than kindergarten age it was my good fortune to be selected for a scholarship by Dr. J. Brinton Smith, founder of St. Augustine's. . . . That school was my world during the formative period, the most critical in any girl's life. Its nurture and admonition gave shelter."[14] David W. H. Pellow suggests it was significant to her developing political consciousness because she experienced an educational environment that was intellectually rigorous, socially aware, and international in scope.[15]

Yet Cooper confronted some narrow-minded ideas concerning gender and education under the school's second principal, the Reverend Dr. Smedes. She wanted to take the full curriculum, but Smedes presumed that girls attended school only to find a husband, so they were denied coursework thought only suitable for boys (such as mathematics, Greek, and Latin).[16] From this, Cooper extrapolated a larger social problem: lack of support for girls' development. She argued that the "atmosphere, the standards, the requirements of our little world do not afford any special stimuli to female development. . . . I constantly felt (as I supposed many an ambitious girl has felt) a thumping from within unanswered by any beckoning from without."[17] She discussed another struggle girls and women faced in pursuing education: they were considered an afterthought since boys and men were the presumed learners. Girls were perceived as a "*tertium quid* [an unclassifiable third factor that fits neither side of a binary pair] whose development may be promoted if they can pay their way and fall in with the plans mapped out for the training of the other sex."[18] In the interests of race pride and progressive politics, she wrote, "I ask the men and women who are teachers and co-workers for the highest interests of the race, that they give the girls a chance!"[19]

Cooper disparaged the idea of a "Ladies Course" and linked such educational practices to cultural norms that impelled women to believe their only "value was purely a relative one . . . to be estimated . . . by the pleasure" they could offer men.[20] Rather than have women "nullify" themselves for "some little man," she

advocated higher education, especially for black women.[21] Through education, a woman's "horizon is extended." Educated women would be "less dependent on the marriage relation for physical support" and more able to "tug at the great questions of the world."[22] Cooper critiqued the narrow "one-sided masculine definition of womanhood" that had long dominated thought, as if a woman had "no God-given destiny, no soul with unquenchable longings and inexhaustible possibilities—no work of her own to do and give to the world—no absolute and inherent value, no duty to self."[23] Through equal education, black women could become equal participants in the future of the race and of the nation.

Cooper was successful in petitioning to take the "Gentlemen's" courses and earned her high school diploma in 1877, the same year she married George A. C. Cooper, a St. Augustine's Greek teacher and theology student from Nassau, British West Indies. In June 1879 he became the second black man to be ordained in the Episcopal Church in North Carolina. Unfortunately, he died suddenly a few months later.[24] Anna Cooper remained in Raleigh, studying and teaching at St. Augustine's.[25] After a few years, she applied to Oberlin College in Ohio, which she entered in 1881 with a scholarship. Mary Church (Terrell) and Ida Gibbs (Hunt) were also in her class and were among the first black women to graduate from Oberlin, where Cooper pursued a classical education.[26] She earned her BA in mathematics in 1884 and became chair of Languages and Science at Wilberforce University in Ohio for a year before she returned to St. Augustine's in 1885 as a professor of math, Latin, Greek, and German. While immersing herself in teaching, Cooper engaged in promoting educational access and equity and joined the North Carolina Teachers' Association.[27] She also helped to establish a college outreach program for African Americans in Raleigh. As Karen Baker-Fletcher notes, Cooper "placed teaching on an equal par with preaching" as a political and ethical calling.[28] She called for equal education in terms of both race and gender before the national convention of African American Episcopal clergymen in 1886. In 1890 Cooper addressed the National Association of Educators, urging women—particularly African American women—to pursue higher education.

In recognition of her college-level teaching experience, Oberlin awarded Cooper an MA in mathematics in 1887, the same year she was recruited to teach math and science at the prestigious Washington (Colored) Preparatory High School in Washington, D.C., known as the M Street High School due to its street address, where she worked for over thirty-five years. "M Street" (later renamed Dunbar High School after the African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar) was founded in 1870. As the largest public high school for African Americans in the nation, it offered a comprehensive curriculum. After her 1887 appoint-

ment at M Street, Cooper's reputation grew. By the 1890s she was flourishing as a teacher, scholar, orator, folklorist, community activist, and human rights advocate. At the Congress of Representative Women at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, she was one of six African American women invited to speak in response to protest against African Americans' exclusion from the exposition.[29] Rather than just discuss black women's progress, as the white women's committee had requested, Cooper pushed her white audience to "progress" by supporting racially inclusive liberation politics.[30] Cooper also addressed the Second Hampton Negro Conference in 1894 and the first conference of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1895.

During this period, Cooper continued to focus on community action. Her lifelong dedication to tackling inequality through community work is not surprising. Though an avid scholar, Cooper argued that book learning alone could be inadequate, that pretenses to "pure" objectivity often obscured abuses of power, and that theorizing without trying to eliminate injustice was insufficient.[31] In the D.C. area, she helped to found several organizations, including the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, the Colored Women's League, the Washington Negro Folklore Society, the Colored Settlement House, and the Bethel Literary Society. She was also the Women's Department editor for the first African American magazine in the nation, *The Southland*, founded in 1890, and worked as interim editor of the "Folklore and Ethnology" column for *The Southern Workman*, published by the Hampton Institute. Cooper's columns focused on a range of topics, from the need to honor and preserve black folklore to arguments as to why black women's unpaid labor in the home should be waged.

Cooper often wove together her various endeavors. For instance, her interest in cultural memory and black folklore was not only the topic of some of her columns. She also cofounded and served as secretary to the Washington Negro Folklore Society to help preserve black folk culture in the nation's capital. In addition, she took up the question of folklore in her 1892 volume, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*. Emphasizing that one cannot "prophesy with another's parable," she suggested folk culture should be the basis of a distinctive African American literary and artistic movement.[32] She wrote, "A race that has produced for America the only folk-lore and folk song of native growth, a race which has grown the most original and unique assemblage of fable and myth to be found on the continent, . . . has as yet found no mouthpiece of its own to unify and perpetuate its wondrous whisperings." Arguing it was time for black writers and artists to portray their own histories, Cooper reminded readers: "There is an old proverb 'The devil is always painted *black*—by white painters.' And what is needed, perhaps, to reverse the picture of the lordly man

slaying the lion, is for the lion to turn painter."[33] As a site of artistic promise and historical memory, she argued, folk knowledge needed to be preserved.

Scholar Mary Helen Washington characterizes *A Voice from the South* as "the most precise, forceful, well-argued statement of black feminist thought to come out of the nineteenth century."[34] In the black and in the white press, at home and abroad, it received praise.[35] As the first book-length volume of black feminist thought in the United States, it still stands out for its breadth of analysis. Cooper took on conventional liberation politics, challenged biased ways of thinking, and revised prevailing knowledge from the standpoint of black womanhood. She critiqued the racism and sexism hampering American literary giants such as William Dean Howells, questioned notions of objectivity by renowned philosophers such as Auguste Comte, countered faulty theological premises churned out by ministers more invested in racism and misogyny than in liberation theology, and refuted the idea that racial diversity was a national "problem."[36] Instead, Cooper found acceptance of race dominance and fear of racial difference to be the real problems, arguing against second-class citizenship for any person.[37]

In challenging established ideas, Cooper took up the issue of unconscious acquiescence to dominant ways of thinking. Reflecting on a recent trip to Canada, she illustrated how one can unintentionally come to accept inequality in everyday life. Cooper belonged to the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, the "pre-eminent debating society and forum for racial issues in Washington, D. C."[38] In 1891 the association organized an exchange of black teachers with those in Canada, and she was among three teachers to go to Toronto.[39] There, she experienced moving about more freely in the public sphere, which, in turn, made her realize she lived daily with a "whipped-cur feeling" in the Jim Crow South. Cooper recognized that she had, to some degree and despite her critical consciousness, become subtly accustomed to this feeling of subjugation. Facing her own internalized oppression, she asked her readers to do the same.[40]

Cooper also took up the issue of internalized dominance, not only among those with obvious power but also among those who should be allies, as they, too, were marginalized. She challenged white feminists who, consciously or unconsciously, held onto privileges of whiteness even as they fought for women's rights in general. Cooper pinpointed how the rights of "womanhood" they advocated were based on white middle-class women's worldview and did not include all women. As an example, she pointed to Anna Howard Shaw's speech, "Woman versus the Indian," in which Shaw presented "woman's" rights as opposed to indigenous rights. Essentially, Shaw put "race" and "womanhood" in a competition, as if they were separate categories—as if no women were "raced"

and no racialized persons were "women." Cooper sarcastically described this as a ridiculous lawsuit she called "Eye vs. Foot" and queried, "Why should woman become plaintiff in a suit versus the Indian, or the Negro or any other race or class who have been crushed under the iron heel of Anglo-Saxon power and selfishness?" Emphasizing that "it cannot seem less than a blunder, whenever the exponents of a great reform . . . allow themselves to seem distorted by a narrow view of their own aims and principles," she concluded that "all prejudices, whether of race, sect or sex, class pride and class distinctions are the belittling inheritance and badge of snobs and prigs."[41] As Hazel Carby argues, Cooper "exposed the historical and ideological framework within which white women defended their own class and racial interests."[42] At the same time, Cooper argued that black men could not "represent" or speak for the race as a whole. Though they had to grapple with racism, they also benefited from the privileges granted to masculinity.[43] Consequently, the "dark man [should not] be wholly expected fully and adequately to reproduce the exact Voice of the Black Woman."[44] She insisted that black men should not attempt to speak for black women.

While best known for her analyses of race and gender politics in *A Voice from the South*, Cooper also took up questions of poverty and labor exploitation. With regard to tenant farming, she wrote: "I wonder how many know that throughout the Southland able bodied, hard working men, [are] toiling year in and year out, from sunrise to dusk, for fifty cents a day . . . ! That they often have to take their wage in tickets convertible into meat, meal and molasses at the village grocery, owned by the same ubiquitous employer!" As for black women workers like her mother and sisters-in-law, she wrote:

> One often hears in the North an earnest plea from some lecturer for "our working girls" (of course this means white working girls). . . . But how many have ever given a thought to the pinched and down-trodden colored women bending over wash-tubs and ironing boards—with children to feed and house rent to pay, wood to buy, soap and starch to furnish—lugging home weekly great baskets of clothes for families who pay them for a month's laundry barely enough to purchase a substantial pair of shoes![45]

Of course, Cooper was not alone in doing this work. The 1890s was a period of intensified "black female intellectual activity" across the United States, including the rise of the black women's club movement, in which Cooper was active.[46] She was chair of an 1895 NACW Committee studying Georgia's convict labor practices and Florida's education laws supporting unequal education based on race.[47] In Washington in 1892 Cooper was a founding member of the Colored Women's League, which organized food and daycare programs

for young children, offered industrial education courses for adults, and fought against discrimination in both housing and employment.[48] At the turn of the century, Cooper's work took an increasingly international dimension. She connected domestic issues of inequality and injustice to global concerns about colonialism and imperialism. She was one of two African American women to speak at the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900.[49] The "conditions under which Africans and people of African descent were forced to live" were discussed, and African history and Ethiopian and Egyptian cultures were highlighted. The congress examined "the plight of southern Africa," questioned the rise of empire, and disputed the Boer War in South Africa.[50] In addition to serving as delegate and speaker, Cooper sat on the Executive Committee, which drafted policy statements sent to heads of state on the rights of all people to self-governance. They also urged Queen Victoria to end colonial rule and the Boer War.[51]

In January 1901 Cooper was promoted to principal of M Street when Robert H. Terrell stepped down to take a judicial appointment. She worked tirelessly to ensure that M Street's reputation would continue to blossom. Cooper obtained college entrance accreditation for M Street so its graduates would not have to take entry exams to apply to top universities. Many graduates won scholarships to such universities as Brown, Cornell, and Harvard, while others pursued higher education at historically black universities, including Howard, Fisk, and Atlanta. M Street received international acclaim under her leadership. After touring Washington's public schools at the invitation of President Theodore Roosevelt, French scholar l'Abbé Félix Klein wrote that Cooper was head of one of the most illustrious schools in the nation. He described her as a superlative scholar and an extraordinary educator.[52] The fact that M Street students scored, on average, higher than white students in districtwide D.C. Board of Education tests challenged racist ideas about "innate" intellectual capacity determined by race.

While serving as principal, Cooper continued to be involved in public service. She cofounded and worked as supervisor of the Colored Settlement House, the first autonomous social service agency in the capital for African Americans. She belonged to the Book Lovers' Club, which in 1906 helped to create a group of schools that, in 1917, became Frelinghuysen University, a college for working black adults "designed for the non-elite population" with satellite campuses, night classes, and affordable tuition.[53] In 1905 the club helped found the first YWCA in Washington, D.C., the Phyllis Wheatley Y, which was independent from the national Y movement.[54] A lifetime member of the Wheatley Y, Cooper served on its board of directors, worked as supervisor of girls' program-

ming, and cofounded and served as guardian of a Camp Fire Girls chapter at the Wheatley Y.

Cooper also remained an active public speaker. She gave several important speeches, including one before the biennial conference of the Association of Friends (Quakers) in 1902, entitled "The Ethics of the Negro Question," in which she debunked the alleged threat of "Negro domination." She highlighted how white mob rule and violence constituted the real threat and mocked whites' fear of blacks that, since slavery, "cowers in the white man's heart" even though whites "outnumber [blacks] five to one, with every advantage in civilization, wealth, culture, with absolute control of every civil and military nerve center."[55] She contended that whites' efforts to maintain a social hierarchy, using lynching and murder as attempts at control, showed white "superiority" to be constructed, not "natural." Asking why the nation would stand by while whites terrorized and destroyed black communities, she presented an unadorned portrait of the so-called progressive era. Cooper underscored how "Ku Klux beatings with re-enslaving black codes became the sorry substitute for the overseer's lash and the auction block." Since the white "American conscience would like a rest from the black man's ghost," instead of forging a true democracy, whites indulged in "self complacency, . . . commercial omnipotence and military glorification."[56] In her bold speech, Cooper showed she would be neither intimidated nor silenced by such threats.

Without question, Cooper was a rigorous and principled leader of M Street. But from the white board of education's point of view, her steadfast public leadership and her ideas about social justice and educational equality were controversial. M Street had long offered full college-preparatory coursework and industrial courses, and Cooper intended to maintain this full curriculum. She disparaged the idea that African Americans were "naturally" suited only for vocational and industrial education and not for a full range of intellectual stimulation and learning.[57] As she had argued earlier, "biological" notions of intellectual capacity were scientifically bankrupt. Cooper maintained that "race, color, sex, condition, are . . . the accidents, not the substance of life"—they result from "circumstance."[58] Regarding race, Cooper wrote that "there is nothing irretrievably wrong in the shape of the black man's skull."[59] Her critiques of biological determinism went beyond her educational philosophy. Whether tackling questions of structural inequality between the races or sexism within the black community, she focused on how these had been created and were not inherent or "natural." Refuting racist and sexist determinisms as ways to "explain" inequality, Cooper pinpointed biases built into people's knowledge and exposed the widespread uses of violence to maintain inequality. In working with the

Social Settlement House, Cooper argued that disproportionate access to wealth, education, and health had nothing to do with biology—it was "inequality of environment" that was at fault.[60]

In line with her rejection of biological determinism, Cooper refused the "racially derogatory textbooks" mandated by the board.[61] Firm in her belief that fighting discrimination and fostering equal education should be her primary responsibilities as a public servant and as a role model to her students, Cooper revised the curriculum and ordered different books. A controversy boiled up. Her open rejection of the curriculum was apparently the last straw (after she had ensured that M Street students scored well on districtwide tests, had gotten accreditation for M Street diplomas for college entrance equivalency, and had refused to separate vocational from liberal arts curricula). Her vision of equitable education for all students was contentious and hotly debated. She did not bend to the will of the board nor did she succumb to the conciliatory race politics of the Booker T. Washington / Tuskeegee "machine" in Washington. Cooper sarcastically described the proposed substandard curriculum for black pupils as "a course of study commensurate with their alleged inferior abilities."[62]

Cooper's long battle with the board was widely covered in the press. Her ethics and expertise were questioned, her pay denied, and her leadership challenged. The board tried to discredit her professionally as an educator and personally as a black woman. Racist and sexist stereotypes abounded: she was portrayed as incompetent, weak, and immoral. In hearings, the board aired unsubstantiated claims that students drank and smoked in school without punishment, that Cooper indulged and protected students incapable of learning or graduating, and that she was romantically involved with a student, her foster child John Love.[63] Louise Daniel Hutchinson asserts, "From the beginning, Anna Cooper's tenure as principal of the M Street High School was marked by turmoil and controversy, for she had refused to compromise her principles in exchange for expediency and the approval of her superiors."[64] Cooper lost her job at M Street by the fall of 1906, when her contract was not renewed and her pay was denied. But she won the curriculum fight: the curriculum was not dismantled. When recounting this incident, she said little, other than to remark, in typical understatement, that the "dominant forces of our country are not yet tolerant of the higher steps for colored youth."[65]

Reflecting on the politics surrounding this and other educational controversies later in life, Cooper made it clear she did not agree with any "solid hand and separate fingers" form of black education as proposed by Booker T. Washington in his 1895 Atlanta Compromise address. She rejected his conciliatory ideas since his model encouraged "the domineering *thumb* to override and

keep down every finger weak enough to give up the struggle."[66] Just as Cooper spurned the notion that girls and women should be educated to become playthings or servants to men, she refused a two-tiered educational system in which an entire race of people were schooled for servitude and second-class citizenship. Instead, she believed education should help each person be "ready to serve the body politic." This, she argued, required not only an excellent curriculum but also confronting the inequalities that influenced educational access and success. Cooper insisted that "the wisest plan of education" would "note the forces against which [the students] must contend," including "the unrelenting struggle for survival." Further, she asserted, those who were disenfranchised needed an education that fostered intellectual curiosity but also political consciousness and resilience. A "neglected people . . . must be fitted to make headway in the face of prejudice and proscription the most bitter, the most intense, the most unrelenting the world has ever seen."[67]

After she was dismissed from M Street, Cooper moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where she worked as a professor of languages at Lincoln University until 1910. One can surmise she chose Lincoln because her friend, the linguist, educator, and suffragist Anna H. Jones, lived in Kansas City. In the summer of 1910, after a change in leadership at the D.C. Board of Education, Cooper was invited to return to teach Latin at M Street, where she remained until 1930. In the summers of 1911 to 1913, she began traveling to Paris, studying French literature, history, and phonetics at the Guilde Internationale. She then applied to Columbia University to pursue a doctorate in Romance languages, and there she engaged in doctoral studies during the summers of 1914 to 1917. However, she could not fulfill Columbia's residency requirement. Cooper was working full time as a teacher, had adopted five grandnieces and -nephews, and had bought a house at 201 T Street in LeDroit Park near Howard University. World War I also presented an impediment, for she became involved in war summer camps and other public service activities. Determined to earn her PhD, after the war Cooper asked Abbé Félix Klein, a colleague in Paris, for help in transferring her Columbia credits so that she could pursue a doctorate in history at the Sorbonne.[68] She enrolled as a doctoral student in the summer of 1924 and was awarded a fellowship for international research by Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first black sorority in the United States. However, the Sorbonne required a new, committee-approved research topic for the PhD. After some negotiations, she began her research on French attitudes toward slavery during the French Revolution, though it was not the approach Cooper had sought to take.[69]

In Washington, Cooper had to overcome several hurdles, including a serious bout of influenza and threats from her supervisors to fire her because she had

traveled to Paris to do research in France's military archives while on sick leave. They later refused to recognize her doctorate either by a new job title or by a salary increase. She also faced difficulties in Paris. Her chief examiner, sociologist Celestin Bouglé, advocated an evolutionary notion of world civilizations. He argued that "Nordic" (white) cultures and peoples were more "naturally" suited to democracy than were blacks.[70] He assigned Cooper his book, *Les idées égalitaires: Une étude sociologique* (Egalitarian Ideas: A Sociological Study) for her dissertation defense. Despite his bias toward whiteness, Bouglé suggested it was Cooper who was racially biased toward slaves and free blacks in Haitian history.[71] In reply, she suggested his assumptions were narrow and based on false premises. Since "the democratic sense is an inborn human endowment" in all people, she rejected his reliance on the pseudosciences of phrenology and craniometry to support his claims.[72]

Cooper defended her Sorbonne PhD in the spring of 1925, when she was sixty-six. "L'Attitude de la France à l'égard de l'esclavage pendant la Révolution" (France's Attitudes toward Slavery during the Revolution) was the title of her dissertation.[73] She was the fourth African American woman to earn a PhD (the third at Dunbar High) and the first African American woman to earn a doctorate at the Sorbonne.[74] In her thesis, Cooper showed how the politics, economics, and logics of slavery and colonialism intertwined. Arguing that the Haitian and French Revolutions were connected political moments, she illustrated how ideas about race and racial hierarchies shaped Enlightenment concepts of citizenship, agency, and personhood. She also demonstrated that issues of property, capital, economy, and class shaped race politics in France and Saint-Domingue; the humanism of the Enlightenment and the Revolutionary era was infused with race and class hierarchies. Illustrating how France's celebrated political vision relied upon exploitation, slave labor, and colonial domination, Cooper focused on the "vast gulf" between France's democratic theories and its actual practices.[75] She approached her topic in a way that presented enslaved and free blacks in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) as agents of history, not merely as imitators of European Enlightenment.

By putting black and transatlantic history at the center, not the sidelines, of French history, she stretched the boundaries of historical knowledge and of political action. Cooper's research emphasized how capitalism was a racially exploitive economic system and underscored the importance of thinking from history's margins. Her dissertation should be considered an important contribution to black modernism and to anticolonial thinking. As David Pellow argues, "Cooper provides us with a unique analysis of diasporean discourse in general and Haiti as a new world narrative of containment in particular.

She mapped the intersection of slavery, race, and imperialism . . . [and] laid the groundwork for future students of diasporean studies."[76] Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan find that Cooper "anticipates by nearly fifty years the key terms of today's dependency theory of global political economy."[77] Yet if known at all, her dissertation is usually only noted as a "first" of history but not read or analyzed.

In 1925 Cooper also published in Paris *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne), a translation of the epic poem from medieval to modern French, which was to have been her doctoral thesis at Columbia. She was unable to find a publisher interested in U.S. distribution of the book, and Oberlin refused donated copies of the volume for an alumni fundraiser.[78] Nor could she interest a publisher in her dissertation.[79] She continued to be snubbed as a scholar in her later career. For instance, both the Brookings Institution and American University rejected Cooper's proposal to research and write a history of African Americans in Washington, D.C. She attributed these rejections to a racist backlash. Both institutions "raised the color bar."[80] Without external support, she could not afford to take on such a large project.

In 1930 Cooper retired from Dunbar to become the second president of Frelinghuysen University. That same year, she founded a school in her mother's memory—the Hannah Stanley Opportunity School—at Frelinghuysen. She considered creating this school her life's outstanding achievement. She wrote that it was "dedicated in the name of my slave Mother to the education of colored working people."[81] As Frelinghuysen's president, Cooper once again had to justify to the D.C. Board of Education a comprehensive education for black students, this time for working adults. To keep it accredited, Cooper argued: "We are poor, our constituency is poor," and "there is absolutely no [other] door open to the struggling colored man or woman, aspiring for the privileges of advanced education and not able to make the hours scheduled at Howard."[82]

As earlier in her career, Cooper insisted that educational opportunities should be made available to all African Americans, not just to elite and middle-class blacks, but her appeals were ignored by the NAACP and by influential leaders in Washington.[83] Renamed the Frelinghuysen Group of Schools, it lost its university status and the right to grant college degrees, as did many other historically black colleges.[84] To keep Frelinghuysen alive in its diminished form, Cooper tried unsuccessfully to get a federal grant from the WPA education division. In the end, she volunteered her own home to house classes, the admissions office, and the library. She also worked without salary as president, professor, and registrar for many years.

While at Frelinghuysen, Cooper took on other activities as well. She continued to help manage the Colored Settlement House.[85] She also published some

short essays in the *Oberlin Alumnae Club Journal* and in the NAACP's magazine *The Crisis* in the 1930s. These included "The Humor of Teaching," in which she advocated a culturally relevant model of black education, and "Angry Saxons and Negro Education," where she challenged Booker T. Washington's accommodationist ideas. She developed a black history curriculum and pageant, "From Servitude to Service," and wrote a children's play, "Christmas Bells," as part of a fundraising campaign for Frelinghuysen.[86] Two important but previously unpublished essays from the period, "The Negro's Dialect" and "On Education," have recently become available.[87]

Cooper retired as Frelinghuysen's president in 1940 but continued teaching there into the mid-1940s and worked as its registrar until around 1950. During this period she undertook some new scholarship. Her two-volume set *The Life and Writings of the Grimké Family and Personal Recollections of the Grimké Family* was privately published in Washington, D.C., in 1951.[88] During the 1950s Cooper also asked historian Ray Allen Billington to edit Grimké's teaching journals and to help to get them published. They were published in 1953 as *The Journal of Charlotte Forten: A Free Negro in the Slave Era*.[89] Unfortunately, there is little information about the last decade of Cooper's life. She died February 27, 1964, at the age of 105.

Anna Julia Cooper was a courageous educator, noted author, and outspoken public speaker. She saw the dimensions of her work (scholarly inquiry, education, and community action) as having a similar purpose—to develop a critical consciousness to effect collective social change. Cooper's philosophy was to connect thought with action and to avoid empty "ratiocination"—that is, theorizing about social problems without attempting to realize change.[90] Instead, she advocated "*living into*" issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression.[91] As an activist, Cooper helped create autonomous black community organizations that supported black women as learners, mothers, and workers, and she advocated for fair housing, equal employment, and equal education for all people. As an intellectual, Cooper emphasized the importance of experiential knowing, self-expression, and self-determination. She unpacked dominant ways of thinking to expose bias at work in philosophical, theological, literary, political, and sociological texts. Moreover, she showed how different forms of oppression must be understood as interdependent—and addressed simultaneously. As an educator, Cooper fought for a comprehensive education for everyone. She developed a culturally relevant curriculum, opposed standardized "one size fits all" tests and teaching styles, and saw education as a site for social justice. As Karen Johnson argues, Cooper "firmly believed that education was the fulcrum for social change and the role of the educator was one of social . . . change agent."[92]

Early on, Cooper was fairly optimistic about the power of education and of voice to be great levelers. She knew that race, gender, and class oppression were entrenched. But she believed education and speaking out—or lifting one's voice to "claim a hearing at the bar of the nation" and engage in democratic debate—were viable pathways to change.[93] Gradually, her certainty about the power of voice and the ability of education to, on their own, effect change shifted. After facing racist backlash from progressive white feminist organizations and male-centered visions of race liberation from black political groups, Cooper gained a heightened understanding of how deep-seated institutionalized oppression was, even among allies in social movements.[94] For example, civil rights leader, scholar, and lawyer Kelly Miller wrote in *The Crisis* in 1915 about "The Risk of Woman Suffrage." Miller proclaimed, "Woman is physically weaker than man and is incapable of competing with him in the stern and strenuous activities of public . . . life."[95] Arguing that no women "needed" the vote, including black women, since men "protect" women and can "give" them all necessary rights, Miller insisted, "the Negro [male] cannot get justice or fair treatment without the suffrage. Woman can make no such claim, for man accords her not only every privilege which he himself enjoys but the additional privilege of protection."[96]

Moreover, many of the issues she took up early in her career were still prevalent four decades later. Such experiences, combined with an exponential rise in violence against African Americans in the early twentieth century, led Cooper to voice a different approach. For example, in "Sketches from a Teacher's Notebook: The Loss of Speech through Isolation," developed after her World War I summer work in West Virginia, Cooper used self-deprecating humor to reflect on her inability to reach out to a family who had been traumatized by lynching. Neither the mother nor the children would engage with Cooper while she approached them as an erudite teacher. As Shirley Moody-Turner maintains, though Cooper had earlier "so completely emphasized the power and importance of 'voice,' here we have a story in which voice falters. . . . Cooper redefines voice . . . to a cooperative mode of communication, a collaborative project rooted in compassionate and ethical social relations."[97] In "Sketches," Cooper also showed that focusing on individual learners and the practice of education in isolation from larger social problems was inadequate. De facto and de jure segregation and rampant violence against African Americans had to be acknowledged. The deep-seated pain, silencing, and trauma that resulted from such violation could not be addressed through curricular content alone, no matter its rigor or breadth.[98] Unfortunately, such shifts in Cooper's ideas are often overlooked, in part because her later writings are not as well known and because her curricular and activist contributions go unremarked.

Whether through curriculum design, activism, or scholarship, Cooper sought to counter history's silences, since African Americans' voices had been "muffled" and misunderstood. In particular, she argued, black women's voices had been silenced in a particular way due to both race and gender.[99] She contended, "The colored woman of to-day occupies . . . a unique position in this country. . . . She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both."[100] In short, there has been "no word from the Black Woman," even though her story of resistance and survival could "furnish material for epics" if only it could be heard.[101] Despite Cooper's efforts to have black women's ideas and histories remembered and engaged with, white women tend to be remembered and memorialized in the popular imagination as feminist foremothers, politically and intellectually. Likewise, it is mostly the "race men" who continue to be recognized as contributors to "the central black political and intellectual debate[s] of the twentieth century."[102] Altogether, Cooper's life work as "a black woman of the South" dedicated to the pursuit of social justice illustrates her deep commitment to identifying and critiquing hierarchical practices and exclusionary ways of thinking, both in domestic and international contexts. This full complexity of Cooper's ideas and the many dimensions of her work deserve to be remembered and debated.

NOTES

1. Anna J. Cooper, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), ii, 93, 137–38, 177, 183, 196.

2. Anna J. Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman in the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation," in Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, eds., *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 202.

3. See Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 25, 89–95, 237–39, 244–50, 254–55.

4. Anna J. Cooper, "Equality of Races and the Democratic Movement," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 293.

5. See Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper: A Voice from the South* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1981), 9.

6. On the notion of beneficent slave owners, see Marvin L. Michael Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, *Slavery in North Carolina: 1748–1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 5. See also Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 19–20. On slave resistance, see Alan D. Watson, "Impulse toward Independence: Resistance and Rebellion among North Carolina Slaves, 1750–1775," *Journal of Negro History* 63, no. 4 (1978): 317–28. Free blacks were prevalent in North Carolina from its earliest history, as documented in 1934 by John Hope Franklin: *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

7. See Cooper, *Voice from the South*; "The Ethics of the Negro Question," "Equality of Races and the Democratic Movement," and "Legislative Measures Concerning Slavery in the United States:

1787–1850," all in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 206–15, 291–98, 299–304; and *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists*, ed. and trans. Frances Richardson Keller (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

8. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 251–53.

9. There is little information about Cooper's larger family, other than what Hutchinson has found in her research.

10. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 26, 136.

11. By 1860, except for one, none of the 271 enslaved people on Haywood's Raleigh properties had been freed by the family. See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 14.

12. Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman," 203.

13. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 193.

14. Cooper, personal note, n.d., Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Anna Julia Cooper papers, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

15. David W. H. Pellow, "Anna Julia Cooper: The International Dimensions," in Dolan Hubbard, ed., *Recovered Writers/Recovered Texts: Race, Class, and Gender in Black Women's Literature* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 63. Pellow notes, as an example, that James Theodore Holly, abolitionist, black liberationist, missionary, and Bishop of Haiti, guest-lectured at St. Augustine's and sent his sons there to study, along with other children from Haiti.

16. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 77.

17. Ibid., 75–76.

18. Ibid., 44.

19. Ibid., 78–79.

20. Ibid., 49, 65.

21. Ibid., 70, 73–79.

22. Ibid., 69, 68, 75.

23. Ibid., 50–51, 65.

24. In 1931 Cooper commissioned a window in his memory at St. Augustine's by Frank J. Dillon. See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 30, 180.

25. Although she never remarried, she did become a parent. She first took in Emma Lula Love and John Love, orphans of friends from Asheville, N.C. See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 37 (examination of Oberlin's "Addendum to the 'Catalogue and Record of Colored Students,' 1862–99," RG 5/4/3—Minority Student Records, Oberlin College Archives, http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/holdings/finding/RG5/SG4/S3/addendum.html [accessed April 25, 2013], suggests the couple were likely Sallie [Sally] Constance Jordan, of Kansas City, Mo., and John Lorenzo Love, of Asheville, N.C.). Later, she adopted her five orphaned grandnieces and -nephews (and took in her sister-in-law).

26. Karen A. Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational Philosophies and Social Activism of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Garland, 2000), 15. Mary Jane Patterson graduated from Oberlin in 1862; she pursued the "Gentleman's Course" and was the first black female principal of the same D.C. high school where Cooper would become principal.

27. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 43.

28. Karen Baker-Fletcher, *"A Singing Something": Womanist Reflections on Anna Julia Cooper* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 42.

29. The others were Hallie Quinn Brown, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Fannie Barrier Williams, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Sarah J. Early. For their speeches, see May Wright Sewall, ed., *World's Congress of Representative Women* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1894). Ida B. Wells protested

with a booklet: *The Reason Why the Afro-American is Not at the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature* (Chicago: privately published, 1893).

30. Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman," 204–5.

31. Anna J. Cooper, "The Humor of Teaching," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 232–35; Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 185–86, 203–8, 216, 291–93, 36–45.

32. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 172.

33. Ibid., 224, 225.

34. Mary Helen Washington, introduction to *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*, by Anna Julia Cooper (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxvii.

35. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 104.

36. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 203–8, 292–93, 9–47.

37. Ibid., 171–74.

38. Jacqueline M. Moore, "Bethel Literary and Historical Association," in Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Organizations* (New York: Garland, 2001), 9.

39. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 107.

40. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 88–89.

41. Ibid., 123, 118.

42. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 102.

43. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 75–78, 134–35.

44. Ibid., iii.

45. Ibid., 252–53, 254–55.

46. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 96. Frances Smith Foster names 1892 "the midwife to modern American literature," the year of Cooper's *A Voice from the South*, Lucy A. Delaney's *From the Darkness Cometh the Light; or, Struggles for Freedom*, Ida B. Wells's *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted*. See Foster, *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746–1892* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 179.

47. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 96.

48. Sharon Harley, "Anna J. Cooper: A Voice for Black Women," in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997), 91.

49. The other was Cooper's friend, activist, and educator Anna H. Jones of Kansas City. Cooper discussed "The Negro Problem in America" and Jones, "The Preservation of Race Individuality." See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 110–11. Ella D. Barrier, who taught at M Street and was secretary to the Washington, D.C., Colored Women's League, and her sister, Fannie Barrier Williams, a Chicago activist and writer, also attended (Pellow, "Anna Julia Cooper," 67).

50. Pellow, "Anna Julia Cooper," 67–68.

51. Alexander Walters, "Chapter XX: The Pan-African Conference," in *My Life and Work* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 260.

52. Klein in Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 58–59.

53. Melinda Chateauvert, "The Third Step: Anna Julia Cooper and Black Education in the District of Columbia, 1910–1960," in Darlene Clark Hine, ed., *Black Women in United States History: The Twentieth Century* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990), 5:265.

54. For more about race politics in the YWCA movement, see Judith Weisenfeld, *African American*

Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905–1945 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

55. Cooper, "Ethics of the Negro Question," 214.

56. Ibid., 210–11, 209.

57. Cooper, "On Education," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 256–58.

58. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 125.

59. Ibid., 26.

60. Cooper, "The Social Settlement: What It Is, and What It Does," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 217.

61. Chateauvert, "The Third Step," 262.

62. Cooper in Harley, "Anna J. Cooper," 92.

63. See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 66–83. See also Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race*, 80–84.

64. Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 81.

65. Cooper, "Class Letter," in Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 83.

66. Cooper, "My Racial Philosophy," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 237.

67. Cooper, "On Education," 250–51.

68. Cooper and Klein first met in 1903 during Klein's tour of American and Canadian schools and religious institutions; they had corresponded since.

69. See Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 139. Cooper had hoped to research France's attitudes toward racial equality, including current (1925) laws about the "droits de cité" in French colonies (examining citizenship rights and equal standing before the French constitution in all areas, including voting, housing, equal protection, etc.) and current (1925) laws in France regarding immigrant populations from Japan, Africa, and India.

70. Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, "World Politics, Race, and Slavery: The Historical Studies," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 270.

71. Cooper, "The Third Step," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 328.

72. Cooper, "Equality of Races," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 293, 297.

73. In 1988 Frances Richardson Keller published a translation of Cooper's thesis as *Slavery and the French Revolutionists (1788–1805)*, reissued as *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists* by Anna Julia Cooper, trans. Frances Richardson Keller (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006). When citing Cooper's thesis in French, I refer to "Cooper *L'Attitude*"; when citing Keller's translation (new edition), I refer to "Cooper *Slavery*." When citing Cooper in English, references to *Slavery* are Keller's translations and references to *L'Attitude* are my translations.

74. For more about Cooper's dissertation, see chapter 4 of Vivian M. May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 107–40.

75. Cooper, *l'Attitude*, 60.

76. Pellow, "Anna Julia Cooper," 61.

77. Lemert and Bhan, "World Politics, Race, and Slavery," 269.

78. Katherine Shilton, "'This Scholarly and Colored Alumna': Anna Julia Cooper's Troubled Relationship with Oberlin College," Oberlin College website, http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/History322/AnnaJuliaCooper/AnnaJuliaCooper.htm (accessed April 25, 2013).

79. Alfred Churchill (whose family she had lived with while at Oberlin), a professor at Smith College, tried in vain to help Cooper find a publisher. See Leona C. Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writings of Anna J. Cooper* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College Dept. of History, 1982), 69.

80. Cooper in Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne*, 82.

81. Cooper in Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 155.

82. Cooper in Chateauvert, "The Third Step," 266.

83. See Cooper's correspondence with Walter White, Chair of the NAACP, and with Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University, in the NAACP papers.

84. By 1934 only 20 percent of the 117 black colleges in the United States gained accreditation. See Chateauvert, "The Third Step," 268.

85. See Cooper's letter to Francis Grimké in Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 123.

86. Baker-Fletcher, *"A Singing Something,"* 39; Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper*, 184.

87. See Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 238–58.

88. Cooper was close to Charlotte Forten Grimké and the Reverend Francis Grimké, who gave Charlotte's papers and journals to Cooper after Charlotte passed away.

89. Sydney Kaplan, introduction to Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne*, xi–xii.

90. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, 295.

91. Ibid., 285.

92. Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race*, 160.

93. Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman," 202.

94. As Cynthia Neverdon-Morton documents, at the 1925 meeting of the International Council of Women in Washington, "Because Afro-Americans would be in attendance, the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow the ICW to use . . . Memorial Continental Hall. When . . . whites [agreed] that Afro-Americans would . . . be required to sit in a segregated gallery, the members of the [black] NACW walked out" (*Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895–1925* [Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989], 201). Cooper had long criticized such actions by white feminist organizations (e.g., her critique of Anna H. Shaw, president of the National American Women Suffrage Association from 1901 to 1915). As Roslyn Terborg-Penn documents, in 1903 the NAWSA board "endorsed the organization's state's rights position, . . . tantamount to an endorsement of white supremacy in most states." Moreover, "Anna Howard Shaw had been accused of refusing to allow a black female delegate at the Louisville suffrage convention in 1911 to make an antidiscrimination resolution" ("Discrimination against Afro-American Women in the Women's Movement, 1830–1920," in Harley and Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman*, 24).

95. Miller in Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes toward Black Women, 1880–1920* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson, 1990), 72.

96. Miller in Marion Vera Cuthbert, *Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate* (New York: Stratford Press, 1942), 78n13.

97. Shirley Moody-Turner, "A Voice beyond the South: Resituating the Locus of Cultural Representation in the Later Writings of Anna Julia Cooper," *African American Review* 43, no. 1 (2009): 65.

98. Cooper, "Sketches from a Teacher's Notebook: Loss of Speech through Isolation," in Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 224–29.

99. Cooper, *Voice from the South*, i.

100. Ibid., 134.

101. Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman," 202.

102. Jonathan S. Holloway, *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919–1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 27.

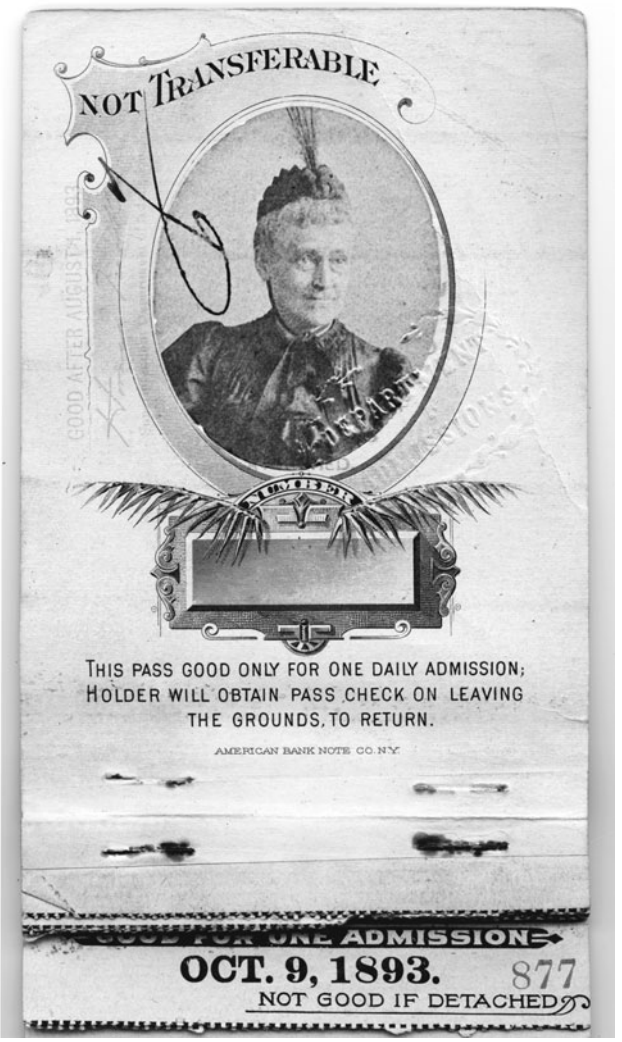
Sallie Southall Cotten

Organized Womanhood Comes to North Carolina

MARGARET SUPPLEE SMITH

"Here I am! again in Chicago to attend a special session of the Board of Lady Managers where I have the privilege of again serving in Mrs. Kidder's place. . . . It is like a dream, like an Arabian Nights tale, this wonderful city of all nations—with its buildings grand within and without—glittering in the sun and holding veritably the treasures of the earth."[1] Brimming with enthusiasm and high expectations, wife of a Confederate veteran, and mother of nine, forty-seven-year-old Sallie Southall Cotten began the journal she kept faithfully from July 7 to November 3, 1893, during her stay at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, where she served as an alternate member of the Board of Lady Managers (BLM) and custodian of North Carolina's Colonial Exhibition. Within a day of her arrival, she toured "La Rabida," the replica of the Spanish monastery from which Columbus embarked for the new world that was Spain's exhibition hall, participated in two tumultuous meetings of the lady managers, heard a lieder concert, saw a parade, attended receptions at the New York State and Californian buildings, met the secretary of the Navy and a famous African traveler, made new friends, and ascertained that the Virginia Dare desk she had commissioned for the fair arrived safely and looked good in its prominent place in the BLM boardroom.

Sallie Cotten was one of the hundreds of thousands of Americans from all sections of the country who experienced the 1893 international fair, widely considered a "watershed"—a historic divide between an agricultural America and a modern industrial one.[2] It was a celebration of American unity and "coming of age" on the international economic, political, and cultural stage.[3] It was also



SALLIE SOUTHALL COTTEN'S EXPOSITION PASS

This official pass permitted Cotten daily access to the World's Columbian Exposition during her four-month sojourn in Chicago in 1893.

From the Sallie Southall Cotten Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

a defining moment in the late nineteenth-century American women's movement that gave organized white middle-class women visibility, ambition, and just plain confidence—a suitable climax to what has been called the "Women's Century." In the words of Bertha Honoré Palmer, president of the BLM, spoken at the dedication of the Woman's Building: "Even more important than the discovery of Columbus, which we are gathered together to celebrate, is the fact that the general government has just discovered women."[4]

Sallie Southall Cotten also discovered the power of women at the 1893 World's Fair. Her experiences in Chicago transformed this North Carolina woman by introducing her to a national culture of "organized women." She then promulgated "club work" for more than thirty years, in the process becoming known as North Carolina's "Mother of Clubs" and transforming women's influence and impact in the state. The energy and resolve she experienced at the Woman's Building guided her conviction to unite women and create a public role for their perspective and concerns in North Carolina and in the New South. As her first modern biographer William Stephenson writes, she left her Pitt County home as a country wife and mother and returned as a public figure.[5] After her summer in Chicago, historian Anne Firor Scott observes, "Cotten came home to launch a career that would last the rest of her life."[6] Anastatia Sims concurs that the fair "awakened her to the potential power of organized womanhood."[7] Sims notes, "For Cotten, as for Kidder, that experience created new opportunities. She became an enthusiastic supporter of women's clubs and devoted the rest of her life to promoting them in North Carolina."[8] Emily Herring Wilson writes of that summer when Sallie Cotten "saw a new world made up of changing colors and patterns. The old world was the farm in eastern North Carolina, and the new was the architectural splendor of the Chicago's World Fair."[9]

We know from Sallie Southall Cotten's almost-daily journal entries what she did during her extended sojourn in Chicago, whom she saw, where she went, what she experienced, and often what she thought and felt. After years living at Cottendale, an isolated farm near Greenville, she left her husband and seven-year-old daughter Elba back home and spent four months as a single woman in a Chicago hotel, dining out with friends old and new, riding the train downtown to go shopping or see an art exhibition, and having no housekeeping or childcare responsibilities. Her days were packed with meetings, receptions, programs, and excursions. What this chapter attempts to do is to reconstruct the places and spaces she experienced at the fair, giving particular attention to the Woman's Building.[10] What kind of impact might those places and spaces have had on her? Exactly what did the international fair offer a woman from rural North Carolina? How did her experiences shape, change, or reinforce at-

titudes and strategies she already held? What tangible and intangible aspects did she implement when she returned home to a charged political climate that was North Carolina in the 1890s and its "progressive" New South identity in the first decades of the twentieth century?

Sallie Southall Cotten's biography suggests she was a person who took advantage of the opportunities life offered her. She was enterprising, imaginative, gregarious, and optimistic; she valued music, reading, and learning. Born in Lawrenceville, Virginia, in 1846 near her maternal grandfather's Brunswick County plantation, to Susannah Sims and Thomas J. Southall, she was the youngest girl of five daughters and one son in a planter family whose finances were so precarious that they often lived entirely on her mother's modest inheritance. Before she was born, her father failed as a planter and later fell into bankruptcy twice. While Sallie admired her mother, she was silent throughout her life about her father and brother, following her mother's advice. "When I could say nothing good, then to be *silent*. It was good teaching." When Sallie was seven, the family moved to Petersburg, which she remembered as exciting: "If I had found myself turned into a Princess and led into a gem bedecked palace I would not have been surprised for it was all so novel and beautiful."[11]

When Sallie's father's rich cousin, John Wesley Southall, offered to take one of the daughters of his improvident relative into his home and to provide for her education, he chose thirteen-year-old Sallie, who was close in age to his own daughter. She was willing to go, even though that meant leaving her family and moving to the small North Carolina town of Murfreesboro in 1859. She lived with the Southall family, which included John; his second wife, Mary; and their daughter, Susan Emily, known as Cousin Sue, in Murfreesboro's most prominent landmark, a grand Greek Revival mansion with a two-story portico. Sallie attended Wesleyan Female College, where her cousin was president of the board of trustees, her older sister Molly taught music, and the curriculum was far superior academically to her school in Petersburg. Although she was the "poor relative," she wrote forty years later to her cousin Sue, "I think very often of your dear father and his kindness to me and I hope he knows that I have tried to make a good use of my education." Years later, Sallie remembered that she was always "obsessed with a desire for knowledge I must have learned to read very early." She also noted that "friendly and sociable in my nature I was popular with my mates and loved to go to school to be with them. This human love of my kind [i.e. women] has always remained with me."[12]

Sallie's newly privileged life changed abruptly when the Civil War arrived at her eastern Carolina doorstep. North Carolina was the last state to secede, but its leaders felt they had no choice when in April 1861 President Abraham Lin-

coln ordered the state to supply troops to fight against its southern neighbors. For schoolgirls like fifteen-year-old Sallie, the patriotism and romanticism of the early war days were exciting. Although she was not fond of "*boys* . . . in the war soldier beaux were abundant . . . they were always mature men who stirred me intellectually if not amorously while young boys near my age bored me." With the advance of Federal troops in winter 1862, civilians fled Murfreesboro and Wesleyan closed, not to reopen until after the war. Sallie wrote, "For 3 years I attended school there until in 1862 a Yankee Raid broke up the school and scattered the scholars."[13]

By spring, she was on her way to the Piedmont to attend Greensboro Female College—alone, since her cousin Sue stayed with her parents rather than continue her education. Greensboro specialized in training teachers, and it seemed likely that, given the uncertainty of the war and her family situation, Sallie would have to teach for a living. She made friends and enjoyed some mild flaunting of rules and of ladylike conventions. Joining one of the school's two literary societies, she became the "editress—which was considered a dignified and womanly title, bearing in its femininess no taint of women's rights, and no gleam of the progress which a decade was to witness," she recalled years later in an 1897 commencement address at the college. She also used a nom de plume, Philo, because it was "scandalous for a lady's name to appear over an article in a paper." War, famine, and a smallpox epidemic marked her year and a half of formal schooling in Greensboro, which ended with her graduation in July 1863 soon after she turned seventeen. It was a somber occasion in which "the sum total of what they said to us then was to emphasize and to urge upon us the importance of our becoming *good wives*, wifehood being considered . . . the great and only aim, and the divinely appointed mission of woman. . . . [E]ven then—young as I was, there dawned upon my consciousness the appalling fear that possibly *I*—and maybe *others*—might not have the opportunity to make good wives—or even *bad* wives—and a great wonder fell upon me as to *what* life might hold for those of us who might [remain unmarried]."[14]

For the remainder of the war she worked as a schoolteacher for private families, first in Concord, then in Edgecombe County, where she met her husband-to-be, Robert Randolph Cotten, a cavalryman and the older brother of two of her students. Although the Confederacy was collapsing around them, she wrote in her memoir, "In the midst of those busy and happy years and just before the surrender of Lee I met the man to whom my heart responded." Robert Cotten, born in 1839, came from a once-prosperous, sixth-generation planter family. His father had squandered the family fortune and died at thirty-eight, and his twice-widowed mother sustained the family with help from her brother, planter

John Johnson, who was Sallie's employer. After the war, Robert Cotten was able to reestablish financial connections with his former New York partner and get a loan to open a general store in Tarboro. He and Sallie married in March 1866, two months before her twentieth birthday, and spent their honeymoon in Baltimore, where he purchased goods for his store. She relished the pleasures of a cosmopolitan city. Their son, Bruce, described his father as a man who "was decidedly aristocratic in his taste and manners, was careful of his friends and associates and insisted on social distinction," whereas his mother descended on both sides of her family from "Irish Catholics turned American Methodists, . . . in a sense her heritage was decidedly revolutionary, impatient of traditions and many conventionalities."[15]

For the next twenty-five years, Sallie Southall Cotten's life was largely domestic, centered on her children and husband, to whom she always referred with proper Victorian decorum as "Mr. Cotten." As she wrote a woman friend, "I tell you a *nice husband* is a first rate thing to have in a family." Robert operated his store in Tarboro and another in Wilson, but he was determined to restore his fortune and status as a planter. In 1866, in partnership with his sister Della's husband, he bought two farms totaling a thousand acres seven miles outside of Greenville in Pitt County, which they named Southwood and Cottendale. Sallie gave birth to the first of what were ultimately nine children, starting with Agnes, born in March 1867. She joined her husband's Episcopal church three days after her twenty-first birthday. Sometime in 1867 political and economic circumstances forced Robert to close the Tarboro store, but he retained the one in Wilson and began traveling as a commission agent for his former partner. In spring of 1868 the Cottens moved to Southwood, which Robert had suggested they call "Southall," an idea Sallie rejected, thinking the name unlucky.[16]

Adjusting to life as a country woman took some doing. A poem she wrote at the time ends with the lines:

> He is a man who'll bravely meet the storms and ills of life,
> And hers will be a happy lot whom he claims for a wife.
> But could *I* be content to live far from the city's din,
> And find delight in raising fowls, and keeping house for him?

At Southwood the mail came only once a week, and sociable Sallie remembered "it was eighteen months before anyone called on her." Her major social outing was a once-a-month trip to the Episcopal church in Greenville. She bore three more children: Robert, born in July of their first summer; Frederick, who died so soon that his birth and death were unrecorded; and a daughter, Alla, born in 1871, who died at eighteen months. No doubt she found rural life hard and

lonely, but in her memoir of the Southwood years, she conflated the breaking in of oxen for farming and Longfellow's poem on the wedding of Priscilla and John Alden, coming to the conclusion that "then and there I realized I had placed my own head in the double yoke of matrimony and resolved that I would pull with my husband and not break his neck or let him break mine by any contrary refusal to pull with him for our mutual benefit."[17]

In 1872 the Cottens moved to the small market town of Wilson so that Robert could tend his remaining store. They lived there for five years, returning to Pitt County and the village of Falkland in 1877, when he opened a branch store near his farms, and then, in what was to be their final move, to a remodeled house on Cottendale plantation in 1878. Even though the Wilson stay was temporary, town life offered an array of stores and services, entertainment, and sociability that country life could not match. Robert presented Sallie with a piano and sewing machine, evidence of the family's growing prosperity and of the manufactured goods available in Reconstruction-era North Carolina. She had three more children in the Wilson years: Bruce, born March 1873; Lyman Atkinson, in December 1874; and Sallie, in July 1876. A son, Preston, was born in Falkland in April 1878. She remembered the "happy years of my children's childhood, in which I learned to forget myself in their welfare and back to which in my old age memory loves to revert." At the same time, the "work of bringing up so large a family was tremendous, but I always found time to read. I kept a book in my sewing basket and read every spare minute I could find, often when I was rocking the cradle." In her memoir, Sallie wrote that marriage brought a "series of adjustments . . . to all of which I cheerfully responded and thus acquired the experience which has filled a long life."[18]

After twelve years of marriage, six moves, and eight children (six living), Sallie and Robert moved in 1878 into Cottendale, their home place for the next fifty years. The two-story country cottage looked comfortable rather than imposing, with a "Carpenter Gothic" veranda extending across the façade and gabled dormers decorated with brackets and finials. For Robert it must have signified recapturing his planter family's way of life, although, without slavery, which he considered repugnant, but with hired hands and tenants. For Sallie it probably meant finally settling down after her many moves since leaving her Virginia family in 1859. For both, life revolved around work on the farm or in the house, with outings to the county fair, annual church conventions, and bathing trips to Nags Head. She had black servants—a cook, a washerwoman, and a nurse for the young children—and a white governess for the older ones. But she did the hard work typical of rural life at that time: child rearing, gardening and canning, tending chickens, hog killing, and housekeeping, including sewing—as

she wrote a friend: "No time for anything but stitch, stitch, stitch." She entered pickles in the state fair and made twenty-four rugs by herself. She organized a school on the isolated plantation for the older children before they went off to boarding school and invited other neighborhood children to participate. She found time for visiting friends, caring for sick neighbors, and entertaining (Cottendale's house parties were renowned) but also practicing her music, reading the many books and periodicals piled up in her parlor and bedroom, and doing some writing. The Cottens worked hard and did well. Genteel and well connected, they were representative of the postwar planter class, leaders in their eastern Carolina community and active in the Episcopal church and Democratic politics.[19]

Occasionally, Sallie Cotten became "depressed and discouraged," feelings she poured out in letters to a former teacher at Cottendale, Kate Connor. Her son Bruce observed that seldom was his mother "furnished that particular quality of intellectual companionship she so desired," which the unmarried Kate provided. He wrote that his mother "lived in severe mental isolation for the greater part of her life. . . . She read and thought and dreamed, and read and thought and dreamed again, with no opportunity of self expression." She combatted her feelings of isolation by writing letters to Kate and others. Anne Firor Scott notes that Sallie Cotten "fits the description of a woman who all her life yearned for ever more education." In 1883 she was entering pickles in the county fair and, a year later, participating in a reading circle she considered "a *mild form of compulsory education* and that is why I joined it. So I would feel *obliged* to read books which otherwise I would neglect." One of the reasons this account of her life can draw so fully on her thoughts and feelings is that she set them down in ink. Two very real tragedies were the death of her first son, Robbie, by drowning on his fifteenth birthday in July 1883 and the death of Kate Connor in June 1886. In October 1886 forty-year-old Sallie gave birth to her ninth and last child, a daughter named Elba, after which she confined her writing to private letters and journals.[20]

In 1890, however, Cotten found opportunity and challenge on a public stage that must have been totally unexpected. The 1890 act passed by Congress that authorized the World's Columbian Exposition stipulated that the governor of each state and territory should appoint two commissioners and two alternates, who would then select four women to serve as regulars and alternates on a separate board of women managers—the first official board created by Congress to include women. This was a concession to Susan B. Anthony and other "organized" women pressing for equal representation on the commission in charge of the World's Fair. Although women did not achieve parity, they did get a Board of Lady Managers with the mandate to raise funds and generate exhibits.

Across the country, women managers tended to be well connected and community minded. North Carolina commissioners appointed Florence Hill (Mrs. George W.) Kidder of Wilmington and Mary Roberts (Mrs. Charles) Price of Salisbury, urban women married to prominent men, as regular lady managers and twenty-two-year-old Virginia Stella Divine of Wilmington as an alternate. Forty-four-year-old Sallie Cotten was named an alternate by alternate commissioner Elias Carr—an Edgecombe County planter-neighbor, her husband's friend, a Cottendale guest, a Democrat with Populist tendencies, and state governor from 1893 to 1897—who told Sallie when she was astonished that he had selected her, "Of all the women I know in the state, you have made the best use of your education, applying it to the betterment of the home."[21]

Although the South generally prescribed a private role for women, the *Wilmington Messenger* proclaimed: "We have seen what the noble, patriotic, self sacrificing women of Carolina did during the dark, troublous times of the Great War. . . . We feel assured that if the women of Carolina make up their minds to have our State put on her beautiful garments at Chicago, that it will be done, our venerated mother will be there radiant and attractive. Let us all unite and help."[22] Miss Divine appears to have been largely inactive, as were the male commissioners and alternates, but Florence Kidder, Mary Price, and particularly Sallie Cotten embraced the opportunity to represent North Carolina in a national venue. At the first meeting of the BLM in Chicago in November 1890, Sallie remembered years later that despite her "fear and trembling" and never having traveled much, certainly not alone as far as Chicago, she "soon felt at home, for I discovered many who knew no more than I did. There are not so many differences in women, after all."[23]

North Carolina had struggled during the war and Reconstruction years. It continued to face hard times and economic vagaries as the cash crops of tobacco and cotton fed the new factories springing up across the Piedmont—altering family life and work for men and women, white and black, rural and urban, but creating the flickers of a New South. The state put sectional grievances and disappointments aside and, once Congress passed the enabling legislation for the fair, joined the rest of the South and the country in supporting the national celebration with delegates, exhibitions, and funds. As the *Wilmington Messenger* declared, "If North Carolina does not do its very utmost it is sure to suffer greatly by the unfavorable contrast made in its own paltry show and the magnificence of other States, not more blessed by nature."[24]

When Sallie Cotten arrived in Chicago she was catapulted from a rural culture in which women's lives revolved around family and home, and voluntary activities of church and community, to the collective approach of organized urban women who by and large composed the BLM and other women in lead-

ership roles at the fair. She and many of those women had been born in the 1840s and 1850s, so they were at an age when family responsibilities, particularly childcare, typically diminished. Overall, the latter half of the nineteenth century created new possibilities for middle-class women, with higher education, expanded professional opportunities, delayed marriage, and lower fertility rates—though the South lagged behind in these trends. Since the late 1860s, many women in the Northeast and Midwest had participated in women's clubs, which expanded their domestic sphere with cultural, social, and reform activities. Such clubs were considered "radical" in North Carolina and the South, even into the twentieth century, but in 1892 five hundred clubs counting a hundred thousand women joined together to create the General Federation of Women's Clubs.[25]

This changed environment meant that many women had begun to understand themselves collectively—as "organized" women with spheres of expertise and influence—and not simply as individuals in a family. It was into this historical context of social and cultural change that the rural North Carolinian was thrust as the lady managers prepared to make their mark in the international exposition, which offered both an "endorsement and reassessment of women's culture" and an emphasis on "women's work" that included paid and unpaid efforts. The BLM had two factions—the Isabella Association, consisting of professional women and suffragists who wanted the Spanish queen to share Columbus's glory; and the Women's Department or Auxiliary, generally wives of prominent men active in philanthropy and social and charitable work. In essence, the women split between working primarily for suffrage and equal rights or for general societal reform. Sallie was firmly in the latter group. Wealthy and sophisticated BLM president Bertha Honoré Palmer understood that women would be judged by how they acted at the fair and skillfully mollified the suffragists while furthering her goals to present women as "united" and to formulate a strategy for the advancement of all women. Although Palmer and the lady managers believed they represented all women, not surprisingly they reflected the biases of their class, race, region, education, and economic situation. Most lady managers did not engage in remunerative work, whereas most employed women worked in mills and factories or in domestic service. And yet, at the opening ceremonies, Palmer declared that, while the nineteenth century promoted invention and machinery resulting in "cheapened manufactured articles," it had "not afforded the relief to the masses which was expected"—strong words from a well-connected woman.[26]

Along with the heady social dynamics of the organized women's culture, the North Carolina woman experienced the dazzling "White City" alongside Lake

Michigan. Its centerpiece was the Grand Court of Honor located on a formal basin—starting with an elaborate administration building, terminated by a peristyle and lined by imposing (though temporary) buildings of similar scale and classical design that would "suggest permanent buildings—a dream city." Exhibitions of manufacturing and liberal arts, electricity, agriculture, mines, and machinery filled the cavernous spaces of massive structures. A canal and bridges connected the Grand Court to lagoons surrounding a wooded island. Along the naturalistic water's edge were intermediate-sized buildings dedicated to the U.S. Government, Transportation, and Horticulture, and smaller ones to Fisheries, Art, and Women. Further to the north were the state exhibition buildings, including Massachusetts's and Virginia's replicas of the historic houses of their Revolutionary War heroes, John Hancock and George Washington, respectively.[27]

The Woman's Building, one of the fair's twelve major buildings, was the first to be started and the first to be completed. In contrast to the well-known architects attached to the others, it was designed by twenty-three-year-old Sophia Hayden, the first woman to graduate in the four-year degree program in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[28] It not only demonstrated that women could control the design and use of public space but provided a showcase for talented women across the country whose work reflected middle-class women as professional artists and craftswomen. Sallie Cotten's July 8 entry declared, "That wonderful Woman's Building—it is full of beautiful things, and the Lady Managers have cause to be very proud of it, and they are proud of it."[29] She could see that the women inserted their presence into a world's fair culture dominated by male directors who had grudgingly granted them a place and would have preferred them to restrict their activities to fundraising.

It was still unusual for women to frequent public places, and the Woman's Building provided a space for women in the swirl of the fair. It featured an all-women orchestra and childcare, comfort stations, a library filled with four thousand books written by women, exhibits of women's inventions and pottery, and a restaurant, tearoom, and café. From Susan B. Anthony to a farmwoman from North Carolina, American women were inordinately proud of their building. Kate Field in her national weekly newspaper *Kate Field's Washington*, wrote:

> If popularity be a sign of approval, the Woman's Building outranks all others. I never entered its portals without being oppressed by an overflow of humanity. Every woman who visited the Fair made it the center of her orbit. Here was a structure designed by a woman, decorated by women, managed by women, filled with the

> work of women. Thousands discovered women were not only doing something, but had been working seriously for many generations. . . . Many of the exhibits were admirable, but if others failed to satisfy experts, what of it?[30]

One can imagine the impact that experiencing women's culture so profoundly in a place designed specifically for that purpose had on Sallie Southall Cotten. While national leaders in the suffrage, temperance, and club movements could travel and exchange ideas and strategies at state, national, and even international levels, the Woman's Building gave ordinary women whose activities had been limited to their local communities the opportunity to meet one another, hear different viewpoints, and learn new ideas in a respectable public setting. As historian Mary Cordato writes, "Serving as the centralized meeting spot for the advancement of women, the pavilion potentially boosted the egos, self-awareness, and mutual bonds of all women like no other public institution or organized activity could do at the time."[31] Sallie Cotten had missed the Representative Women's Congresses in May, a week in which women leaders from all over the world, including North Carolina's Anna Julia Cooper, addressed issues of importance to women in a public forum, but she had plenty of time to participate in formal and informal activities in the Woman's Building.

The Renaissance-style building played an important part in her daily routine. She could drop in for its receptions and programs, attend meetings, peruse the library (for which she had collected books by twenty-six North Carolina women authors), meet friends, dine at the rooftop restaurant, or stop by the North Carolina Room, used by women journalists covering the fair. It was known as the Homespun Room because North Carolina manager Mary Price had decorated it with mountain flora and crafts.[32] Sallie never missed the opportunity to take visitors to view the Virginia Dare desk that she had commissioned to be carved by Tarboro artist Kate Cheshire and that was prominently situated in the BLM boardroom. For her, the desk symbolized her quixotic quest to have Virginia Dare's birth recognized and celebrated in multiple ways—a statue by sculptor Louise Lander that she contrived to get to North Carolina; her paper on Virginia Dare that she had printed and foisted on just about everyone she met; and her dream of establishing the Virginia Dare School for Manual Training. She hoped young women could learn domestic science (as men learned military science at West Point and Annapolis), but her dream never materialized.[33] She attended lectures on a variety of topics, including numerous addresses on suffrage, but "as yet I am not convinced of the wisdom of such action."[34] She thought woman may have the "right," but "it may be wiser for her not to claim or use that right." She was unimpressed with "Old Mrs. [Isabella Beecher] Hooker."[35]

She had to be impressed by the force of organized womanhood represented in the Organization Room.[36] Fifty-eight clubs sent materials, with space allotted to the General Federation of Women's Clubs second only to that of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Jennie Cunningham Croly, the Sorosis Club founder who wrote the history of the women's club movement in 1898, declared, "It was found that club women and others from all over the country spent hours and even days in the study of the volumes. . . . Thousands of Federated women visited the Exhibit, wrote their names and addresses in the Book of Records, and took notes." The range of organized women's activity was eye-opening—from engaging in charitable work, to orchestrating campaigns for social purity, temperance, and other social reformist goals, to lobbying for housing, factory, and child labor legislation. The exhibits showed the relevance of women's culture, agency, and influence in the modernizing world, yet did not challenge or reject their traditional domestic sphere.[37]

Cotten stayed at the moderately priced Rossmore Hotel, which became the venue for many visitors from home—though Mrs. Kidder, Governor Carr, Raleigh publisher Josephus Daniels, and others stayed at the Palmer House downtown. According to her September 10 entry, "the hotel here is now full of North Carolinians! . . . a N.C. reunion really."[38] Attendance at the fair built slowly but noticeably over the summer, with many North Carolinians arriving in August and September. She served as hostess and tour guide for friends and acquaintances from Asheville to Wilmington.

Her journal reveals how much she enjoyed the conviviality of the fair, the new friends she made, the "crowds" from home, and the celebrities she met, including Thomas Edison, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Colonel Roberts of "Robert's Rules," and Ulysses S. Grant's son Colonel Frederick Grant (who was married to Bertha Palmer's sister Ida). She relished the perquisites of being a lady manager, including receptions at various state exhibition buildings and grand homes. When summer meetings of the BLM ended in mid-August and she stayed on to assume her duties as custodian of the state's colonial exhibition, she missed her BLM friends who had gone home but filled her days seeing North Carolina visitors. She spent entire days and many evenings at the fair, a welcome change from the isolation she sometimes felt at Cottendale.

She spent hours as the paid custodian of North Carolina's colonial exhibition in the rotunda of the U.S. Government Building.[39] The display contained North Carolina Indian relics and other colonial artifacts assembled by Mrs. Kidder and Cotten. Although far short of the full-size replica of the governor's palace at New Bern that the women had hoped would be North Carolina's exhibit, the historic artifacts established North Carolina's position as one of the

thirteen original colonies.[40] Because the state did not have a separate building at the fair, it could not celebrate a North Carolina Day, and so Virginia Dare's birthday, August 18, passed without official recognition, much to Sallie's disappointment.[41] In September she was able to get a facsimile of the Edenton Tea Party painting, which added to the exhibit's appeal. Although Sallie took her responsibilities seriously, she found that listing exhibit artifacts for the awards was "tiresome," and she "dutifully" arranged for the exhibition to be photographed for posterity. With the onset of fall, the rotunda seemed cold and drafty, and she sometimes went home early. But she never tired of recounting for visitors stories of the state's early history.

The Woman's Building no doubt aroused Sallie Cotten's interest in the associational "work" of organized women, giving her inspiration and strategies, while her stint in the rotunda with the colonial exhibition encouraged her interest in history and memory, which had significant consequences when she returned home.

Perhaps surprising is the amount of time she spent on the Midway Plaisance, the amusement park and ethnographic exhibition area. Although Bertha Palmer and her colleagues may have wished the Midway (and its attractions such as beer gardens and belly dancing) would close down, it was too profitable to the fair for that to happen, so they tried to ignore its presence. Scholars have analyzed how the Midway reinforced the "otherness" of non-European cultures by establishing clear racial hierarchies in public space that implied a progression from primitive to civilized cultures and how exploitative, demeaning, and even deadly its ethnographic exhibits were.[42] Certainly it feels astonishing today to look over the site plan and realize that Native Americans, men and women from West African Dahomey, and Laplanders were clustered in villages at the furthest edge of the Midway, with Algerians, Tunisians, and the Moorish Palace halfway, and the settlements of the white European ethnic groups—Germans, Irish, and Dutch—closest to the fairgrounds proper. Japanese and Chinese exhibits were interspersed along the Midway, and the Ferris wheel occupied its center. The exotic shops and artisan activities of the Oriental and "other" non-Western cultures provided a stark contrast to the machines and classical architecture of the industrialized nations.

Such racial distinctions probably seemed appropriate to Sallie as a white woman from the segregated South. She frequented the Midway on numerous occasions with congenial lady managers, North Carolina visitors, family, and friends. She enjoyed its ambiance, fireworks, and "magically" lit Ferris wheel.[43] Soon after her arrival, she and a group of women visited the Viking ship "from the days of Leif Erikson" and took in the Plaisance—"What a lark we had! What

wonders we saw! What visions of foreign lands and customs to be seen—a reproduction of home life in every phase of civilization and even of barbarism."[44] When husband Robert came to Chicago in early September, on his first full day in town they toured the fair, dined on the roof of the Woman's Building, and spent the evening on the Plaisance.[45]

On one particularly memorable occasion shortly after her arrival in Chicago, she joined other board members and Susan B. Anthony for Colonel William (Buffalo Bill) Cody's Wild West Show for a Saturday performance "by special invitation."[46] The board had been engaged in a contentious discussion about whether the fair should be closed on Sundays. WCTU leader Frances Willard believed the Sabbath should be kept holy, while Susan B. Anthony felt the fair should stay open on Sunday so that working people could attend. Eventually the board accepted Willard's position, but when Anthony was later approached by an indignant minister who asked whether she would like a son of hers to go on a Sunday to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, she replied that she would—adding that "he would learn far more than from the sermons in some churches." Buffalo Bill was so delighted that he offered the venerable suffragist a box seat at any performance she chose. When her friend Anna Howard Shaw urged her to take up his offer, Anthony invited anyone who wanted to go along. In Shaw's account, when twelve women showed up at the box office and were told a box held only six, Anthony smiled, "'Why, in that case,' she said cheerfully, 'you'll have to give us two boxes, won't you?'" When Cody entered the arena, rode over, and saluted the boxes, "Aunt Susan rose, bowed in turn, and for a moment as enthusiastic as a girl, waved her handkerchief at him, while the big audience wildly applauded." Later, Sallie and Lady Manager Evelyn Douglas Wise of Virginia went to Buffalo Bill's tent, where they met him and his wife.[47]

This story suggests that even though Sallie did not consider herself a suffragist, she was on good enough terms to be Anthony's guest. Second, she had spent two years traveling the state in 1891 and 1892, giving talks to raise interest and funds for the North Carolina exhibition building. She had met objections that the fair would be open on Sundays by insisting "the North Carolina building . . . *will be closed on Sundays*."[48] Of course North Carolina never got its building, but once in Chicago, she seems to have relaxed her stance toward Sunday closings. Finally, this adventure indicates that she was still irrepressible, enjoyed a good time, and was impressed by the celebrity of Buffalo Bill.

It is impossible to know if Sallie saw or what she thought of some of the women's iconic stand-alone exhibitions, such as the Workingman's Home, the Rumford Kitchen, or the New England Kitchen, which used the latest scientific principles and efficiency models to lay out an agenda for organized and

professional womanhood. She did not mention them in her journal. Perhaps they seemed more applicable for the urban North than for North Carolina, in which only one in ten people in 1900 lived in towns, and only six towns had more than ten thousand people, though the Piedmont was urbanizing rapidly. On September 29, however, she took two daughters of a Winston visitor to the Children's Building, where they could have seen a demonstration of new theories and methods of childcare and education, as twenty-five working-class and foreign-born girls (rotated from a local school) learned the rudiments of housekeeping and American values.[49] The emphasis on acquiring housekeeping capabilities would resonate for her vision of the Virginia Dare School.

By late September, with the fair to close in five weeks, Sallie began looking at exhibits for "food for thought." She was optimistic that "great results would reach out from it to meet the next century." The World's Columbian Exposition ended on October 31. Exhibitions were dismantled and shipped home, the grand temporary buildings demolished, and the once-festive fairgrounds looked forlorn and desolate. In her last diary entry on November 3, she wrote, "Good bye Chicago! Good bye White City! The World's Fair is dead, but memories will keep it bright, and the future results will be its real luster."[50]

One of the memories she took with her was seeing how effective women could be in public leadership. Bertha Honoré Palmer had pulled off an extraordinary coup. She created one of the most popular buildings at the fair, showcased women's work and accomplishments, and made women a significant presence, not an afterthought, at the fair. As Sallie wrote on August 1, "It is a great honor to have been a *woman* judge in this Exposition. Woman is advancing very rapidly."[51] Sallie was awed by Palmer's political acumen and social skills. October 28 was Woman's Day at the fair with all-day ceremonies at the Woman's Building, and Sallie had the "pleasure" of sitting by Bertha Palmer at the evening reception and concert when they heard the startling news that the mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison, had been assassinated.

Importantly, the fair provided an opportunity for Sallie Cotten and other southern women to become part of the national movement of organized women. Southern states supported the 1893 fair to a lesser degree than did other regions, and southern women faced both resistance at home by playing public roles as lady managers and perhaps some condescension by northeastern and midwestern colleagues. As Palmer noted, "In the Southern states it has been so hard to convince people that women were able to do such work."[52] Yet in Chicago, southern women made a place for themselves.

Still, being from the South carried a certain stigma. After Palmer successfully lobbied Congress for funds for the Woman's Building, she consolidated her

authority and formed a smaller group of twenty-five "favored few" for an executive committee of the BLM. Georgia's Rebecca Felton was indignant at being excluded, writing, "*From Washington city to the Mississippi river*, the six *states* of Va.—S. & N. Carolina, Georgia, Ala and Miss—not *a single lady*." She continued: "These *were the states that endured the shock* of civil war—*bound by ties of the strongest nature*—blood suffering and death—*and yet Mrs. P has not noticed a single one*—I was so anxious this should be a Peace Congress of women—*genuine*—but we are despised for some reason."[53] Since Felton had proposed a southern exhibition illustrating slavery, with a cabin and "real colored folks" spinning cotton and playing banjos—highlighting the "ignorant, contented darkey as distinguished from [Harriet Beecher] Stowe's monstrosities," it seems understandable why Bertha Palmer chose to distance herself from her.[54] Yet, Virginia's replica of Mount Vernon had elite white women presiding over the historic house while elderly African Americans enacted domestic tasks: the national patriotism associated with George Washington's domain provided an acceptable "mask" for plantation slavery.[55] When black women attempted to participate in the fair, they were rebuffed by the lady managers, and some southern women made derogatory remarks that became public. Palmer sought to defuse the situation by having all southern lady managers send "an expression of their goodwill and wish to help the colored people in their respective states." Some were disgruntled, but Sallie Cotten signed her pledge "cheerfully."[56]

Sallie Cotten apparently could make friends anywhere: she mentioned excursions, dinners, and "long" conversations with lady managers from states north and south. On August 2 she was part of a small group invited by Palmer to have an "*informal* friendly conference" after the regular meeting adjourned, which she called "a thrilling little episode!" She was always pleased to see southern women do well. In her July 21 entry Sallie applauded Mrs. Brody's fine address—"proud of the responsibilities shown by Southern women." On August 15 she heard Tennessean Clara Conway deliver a lecture called "The Need for a Great College for Women of the South," and when Corrine Harrison of Greensboro responded sensibly, Sallie wrote, "I was delighted, as I am always to see N.C. women acquitting themselves well."[57]

When Sallie returned to Cottendale in November 1893, she was eager to implement the women's culture and "woman's work" she had experienced at the Woman's Building and World's Fair. Her sense of womanly empowerment was checked, however, by the racially charged political situation at home. As Anastatia Sims writes in her study of women's organizations and politics in North Carolina, the 1890s was a "turbulent decade" in which "fierce political battles pitted Democrats against Republicans and Populists, New South Apostles

against agrarian reformers, and whites against blacks. Debates over economic policy gave way to vicious campaigns of racial hatred." To regain political control from the "fusion" of Republicans and Populists, Democrats engaged in a brutal white supremacy campaign marked by violence and voter intimidation. The legislature enacted Jim Crow laws. Sallie's cohorts from her Chicago adventure, Governor Elias Carr and Raleigh publisher Josephus Daniels, were both deeply enmeshed in Democrats' attacks. Sims observes that the "political turmoil affected women as well as men." Just as their opportunities in education, employment, and public life were expanding, including the development of independent women's organizations, women became collateral damage in the war against blacks accused of rape and assault against them. Women could not need protection and be independent at the same time. Women's hereditary groups, especially the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), which Sallie Cotten joined, experienced major growth in the 1890s. Indeed, the UDC, which supported the "white supremacist glorification of the Lost Cause" and buttressed racial and class distinctions, flourished, while other groups, especially those encouraging women to think and act independently, languished.[58]

Although Sallie Cotten returned to North Carolina transformed by her Chicago sojourn, her experiences in the "White City" probably did not challenge views she already held about the relative position of whites and blacks in the social, political, and economic order. She was hardly alone. As Robert Rydell argues, the "cultural machine" that was the White City systematically excluded African Americans and reinforced white Americans' shared sense of racial identity and supremacy.[59]

Sallie did discover, however, that organized white women were a force with which to be reckoned, and that she was too. She could be both a southern lady and a progressive woman. Drawing on her contacts from Chicago, she was a principal speaker at the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, where she explained that since women played active roles in society, the government should educate them in national training venues such as her idea for the Virginia Dare School. As the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote, "Mrs. Cott[e]n, while she is advanced, evolved and intellectual in an unusual and brilliant degree, is southern to the very core."[60] The Atlanta appearance led to her becoming a speaker and organizer at the 1897 convention of the National Congress of Mothers and at numerous other women's groups, in which her intelligence, personality, and public demeanor charmed everyone. For the next thirty years, Sallie Cotten dedicated herself to encouraging white middle-class women across the state to embrace more than traditional church and benevolent work, to undertake organized women's "work" by forming woman's clubs

for self-improvement, and to uplift their communities and their state. If the first half of her married life was largely domestic, much of the second half was spent in the public eye, as a leading clubwoman in a movement with important social and political consequences for North Carolina.

By the end of the 1890s women's clubs—both for personal benefit and community good—began to be established in North Carolina, though they were still controversial and few in number. "May be we'll be a power for good—we feel almost sure of doing no harm": with this cautious manifesto, in 1899 Mina Weil of Goldsboro told her daughter Gertrude, who was away at Smith College, of plans to form the state's first woman's club, for "self-improvement and social betterment." The Goldsboro women had been inspired by the 1898 visit of feminist writer and social reformer Charlotte Perkins Gilman to create a woman's club that was secular, even political; open to Jews and Gentiles; and focused on topics from literature and literacy to nutrition and health. The first organizational meeting evidently caused a "stir" in the community, and a local reporter quoted Mrs. Weil as saying that "a small group of men, gathered outside as the women came out of the building, predicted dire things now that women had organized and said: 'They'll be wanting the vote next and that would be too dreadful.'" Sallie Cotten later recalled, "Clubs were few and *unpopular*—were considered unwomanly and existed solely for mental culture."[61] Yet she persevered in her belief that women were different from men, that they were morally superior, and that organized women could change society for the better. Having a woman's club indicated that even a smallish town was up to date and progressive.

In 1899 "Mrs. Robert R. Cotten" wrote a letter "To the Women of North Carolina," enlisting their support for her effort to form a state federation comprising all the organizations of women in North Carolina. She intended to bring them together and with women of other states to secure "the increased benefits which come from enlarged acquaintance, exchange of thought, and unity of action with definite aim." The movement, she wrote, is "non-sectarian, non-political, and only designed for mutual helpfulness." Although most states, including eight southern states, had formed federations of women's clubs in the 1890s, North Carolina had not. Local women's clubs were provocative enough without the specter of women organized statewide. But the timing was right. Anastasia Sims suggests that the 1900 election of Democrat Charles Brantley Aycock, a leader in white supremacy politics, as governor "silenced the rhetoric of rape, subdued fears of assault, and gave white women more latitude to experiment with new roles."[62] It is perhaps a bitter irony that the strengthened position of white supremacist men may have created a tolerance for white clubwomen's activities.

In May 1902 Sallie Cotten's efforts bore fruit. She and women representing seven clubs including several towns across the state met during the Centennial Celebration of Salem Academy at Salem College in Winston-Salem and established the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs (NCFWC). A year later, the NCFWC affiliated with the national organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The clubwomen established four departments—Education, Library Extension, Village Improvement, and State Charities—and scheduled a first statewide convention for the following October. Thirty-seven-year-old Salem alumna Lucy Bramlette Patterson, whose husband was a prominent attorney and industrialist, and who would be active in the Woman's Association for the Betterment of Public Schools, the DAR, and other historical groups, was elected president, with Sallie Cotten as vice president.[63]

From then on, Sallie was primarily devoted to the NCFWC, whose motto was "The Union of All for the Good of All." She served as president from 1911 to 1913. In her presidential address, she stated her conviction that the future of Western civilization lay in educated, Christian clubwomen: "Not education alone, not Christianity alone, not woman alone, but these three in one, and organized for united effort."[64] William Stephenson writes that the combination of education and social influence for women was "thrilling" to Sallie—women could exert their moral influence without actually getting into politics.[65] Planters and industrialists promoted the economic development that fueled New South prosperity, but clubwomen, many of them married to those same men, coped with the social consequences. In North Carolina, women tended to avoid controversial issues like woman suffrage and child labor, though the Federation endorsed certain legislative acts and in 1913, given its interest in education, secured passage of a law permitting women to sit on local school boards. Sallie's generation was typically not involved in politics, content to leave that to men. For instance, Sallie's husband, Robert, served in the House of Representatives (1909–11) and the U.S. Senate (1911–13). By the 1920s a younger group of women expected to use the Federation to launch women into the political world. With her capacity for friendship and generosity, Sallie Cotten welcomed Mina Weil's daughter Gertrude's enthusiasm for civic reform and club work, training her for its practical aspects and giving her broad public exposure.[66]

From Asheville to Greensboro to Edenton, federated clubwomen gathered to educate themselves, study local problems, establish libraries and rural bookmobiles, campaign for literacy, engage in civic and social reform, lobby for education standards and some child labor reform, advocate clean water and sanitation standards, and improve institutions of correction. Just as they stretched the boundaries of their domestic sphere through their many projects, they helped

to redefine and stretch the notion of the proper role of government in society. Many women, especially on the local level and in Raleigh, were involved in the "City Beautiful" movement, which had evolved in response to the classical architectural and formal planning of the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Believing in "municipal housekeeping," they made their hometowns clean, safe, and beautiful as an extension of their domestic responsibilities. "The organized women's club is to the community what the individual woman is to the home circle," declared NCFWC president Clara Swift Souther Lingle in 1915. "One woman alone can keep her house spotless, a hundred women acting together can make civic and moral righteousness not only a possibility but an actuality."[67]

"What has been known as the Woman's Movement, was a *revolution*—bloodless but not purposeless": so begins Cotten's 1925 history of the NCFWC. A legacy of her Chicago experience fortified by thirty years of club work in the state, her rhetoric at times echoed that of Bertha Palmer in 1893. Sallie credited education as being responsible for women's ability to answer the call to community service, in addition to performing their domestic and maternal duties. As she wrote, "Without knowing *why*, woman has started on the adventure of self-development, facing with courage past race habits and traditions, masculine ridicule—once so hard to bear—and all the handicaps incidental to the attainment of an acknowledged equality with man." She equated woman suffrage and women's clubs in their quest for validation. The "demand for suffrage" got "respect" and then "Justice prevailed." The club movement was "first derided, then tolerated as a passing fad, then acknowledged as good for women and for the world . . . moved onward, gaining influence and respect." She made the distinction between women's clubs—for "culture and reform"—and men's clubs—for "pleasure and self-indulgence." She documented the efforts of clubwomen to protest sex discrimination and noted that when women *could* choose to discriminate against men, they did not, but instead were inclusive and welcoming. When the Panama Canal was being constructed, and engineers wanted their families along, the U.S. government fostered women's clubs there with the understanding that the women's club work would benefit them and their husbands' happiness and work.[68] For Sallie Southall Cotten, women's clubs resonated nationally and internationally but also locally.

Beginning in 1900 she attended Tuesday afternoon meetings of the End-of-the-Century Club in Greenville every two weeks, from fall to spring. Greenville was a typical small eastern North Carolina town—some twenty-five hundred people, several blocks of brick stores, small neighborhoods of modest and prosperous houses, unpaved streets, and rudimentary civic services. She realized that if a woman's club could thrive there, it could do so in towns across the

state. Sallie gently nudged her "organized" neighbors from their cultural and literary interests to consider community needs, current events, and then global affairs. When the local alderman would not help start a town library, the clubwomen took it upon themselves to open what was Greenville's only library until 1917. Once a year, Sallie invited all members to Cottendale for an outing, and the club held an annual banquet. For gregarious Sallie, good works and good times went hand in hand.[69]

For some years, Sallie Southall Cotten held on to her dream of creating the Virginia Dare Training School, which combined her belief in the importance of educating women with her fascination with Virginia Dare. As DAR historian Laura Orr declared in 1912, "From the day when Virginia Dare was so wise and obliging as to open her eyes on North Carolina soil, the women of North Carolina have helped to *make* history." For Sallie and other white clubwomen, Dare's birth was seen as the foreshadowing of a significant role for women in American history: "The first white child born in America of English parents *was a girl*, and her birth and baptism would seem to dedicate this land to Christianized womanhood."[70] Sallie had promoted Virginia Dare's historic significance by making certain that everyone with whom she came in contact at the World's Fair saw the desk and that Louise Lander's statue of an adult Virginia Dare would be permanently ensconced in North Carolina. Virginia Dare embodied two of three of Sallie's criteria for saving the world—she was Christian and female. Sallie and her colleagues were unabashed in their adulation of Virginia Dare.

Upon her return home from Chicago, she and her good friend and "sister" BLM Florence Kidder, the founder of the Colonial Dames in North Carolina, decided to allocate the $4,000 they had collected for the North Carolina replica of Tryon Palace (that was never built) to form the Virginia Dare Memorial Association and raise additional funds to establish "a national school of industrial arts and sciences for women, where they can be systematically trained for the science of domesticity and peace, just as boys are trained for war at West Point and Annapolis." Aided by the federal government, the school would be located in North Carolina, "because in that State the history of America, and the history of white women in America, began." Inevitably, the 1893 establishment of the Normal and Industrial School for Women at Greensboro (WC, now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) and its success made the Virginia Dare School redundant. When Sallie Cotten gave the 1897 commencement address at Greensboro College, she was silent about the Virginia Dare School.[71]

In 1895, however, to help raise funds, she wrote and published her long narrative poem *The White Doe: The Fate of Virginia Dare*, based on a legend she had

heard while traveling through eastern North Carolina on behalf of the fair. In a cadence reminiscent of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, she told how Virginia Dare grew to adulthood among native Indians and how an evil medicine man transformed her into a white doe. Wearing a doeskin dress made especially for her, Sallie crisscrossed the state presenting the poem to enthusiastic audiences. While the image of her decked out in doeskin reciting in a rhythmic tom-tom chant the story of the "snow papoose" who grew into a young maiden with mystical powers seems incongruous today, it reflects her cultural parameters, in which history, mythology, poetry, legend, romance, and popular entertainment converged. In an 1896 letter to Governor Carr proposing a public reading of the poem, she wrote, "I think I can guarantee to *entertain* the audience, while not claiming to be much of a *poet*."[72]

Like others of her class, gender, faith, and education, Sallie Cotten took an active interest in the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, which, at the turn of the twentieth century, promoted a view of the state's history that highlighted English settlers and white planters. This evolved into today's State Division of Archives and History. While these elite women were the pioneers of North Carolina women's history, they engaged in a highly crafted memory of the historic past that stressed conservative values and unbroken links from the English colonial past through the Lost Cause to the New South present.

Sallie Cotten thrilled to new inventions of the twentieth century—from automobiles to airplanes to radios to telephones to motion pictures. The zest for popular culture she exhibited on the Midway in Chicago continued throughout her life. After attending the movies in Baltimore, she wrote a longtime correspondent in 1909, "If I were rich I would have a moving picture theater out here at once so these country people could get some interesting, cheap recreation and at the same time derive the same benefits we derive from *travel*." Her children were now all married and scattered, with two daughters living in Massachusetts, which led her to comment, "So it looks to me like Mr. Cotten and I are thoroughly *reconstructed*."[73]

Sallie's taste for public life and community service that had been awakened in Chicago never flagged, nor did her appreciation for the power of organized women, her capacity for making new friends, or her ability to adapt to new circumstances. Anne Firor Scott credits "her influence on younger women . . . one of the formative forces in North Carolina social history in the first decades of the twentieth century."[74] Twenty years after her Chicago adventure, when she was thwarted in an attempt to have women represented on school boards because they could not vote and therefore under North Carolina law could not

serve in office, Sallie wrote in her 1913 dairy: "Thought much about women on school boards. . . . Must we all become suffragists?"[75] Twelve years later and five years after the Nineteenth Amendment, she concluded in her history of North Carolina women's clubs that as far as woman suffrage was concerned, "justice prevailed."

Sallie Southall Cotten's journey from postwar southern lady to progressive-era clubwoman defies neat categorical descriptions. Thirty-five years after her summer in Chicago, in May 1928, at age eighty-one, she addressed an alumnae dinner in Greensboro on the place of women in the modern world. She was introduced as "a Lindbergh of her sex."[76] After her husband's death in August 1928, she moved to Massachusetts, where she lived with daughter Sallie. At age eighty-two, in her last public appearance, at a mammoth gathering of women in Boston that was broadcast on the radio, she was introduced as the "Julia Ward Howe of the South."[77] No doubt Sallie Southall Cotten was as surprised as everyone else. She died the following year, 1929.

In the years since her Chicago experience, this southern lady and North Carolina woman had expressed progressive thoughts and initiated progressive action and brought the state's clubwomen, and indeed many others, along with her. Her life was a testament to what "enlarged acquaintance, exchange of thought, and unity of action with definite aim" can achieve.[78]

NOTES

1. Sallie Southall Cotten's journal, World's Columbian Exposition (July 7 to November 3, 1893) in the Sallie Southall Cotten Papers, folder 15, volume 2, 1893 (digitized), Southern Historical Collection, at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC–Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal). Dates of journal entries are cited in parentheses. There are four collections of papers of Sallie Southall Cotten in the Southern Historical Collection (hereafter cited as SHC)—the Sallie Southall Cotten Papers; the Cotten Family Papers; the Lyman A. Cotten Papers; and the Elizabeth H. Cotten Papers—as well as individual manuscripts and published writings in the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

2. Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950), 54.

3. Robert W. Rydell, "A Cultural Frankenstein? The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," 249–66, in Keith L. Eggener, ed., *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004).

4. Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy, 1981), 223. See also Frances K. Pohl, "Historical Reality or Utopian Ideal? The Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 5 (1982): 289–311; Virginia Grant Darney, "Women and World's Fairs: American International Expositions, 1876–1904" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1982); Mary F. Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere: Women's Work, and Culture at the World's Fairs of 1876, 1893, and 1904" (PhD diss., New York Uni-

versity, 1989); T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, ed., *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

5. William Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten: A Woman's Life in North Carolina* (Greenville, N.C.: Pamlico Press, 1987).

6. Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 133–34.

7. Anastatia Sims, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), 18.

8. Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 43.

9. See Emily Herring Wilson's essay, "Sallie Southall Cotten, 1846–1929," in Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Herring Wilson, *North Carolina Women Making History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 201–4.

10. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz examines the influence of the architecture and landscapes of selected women's colleges in *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Origins to the 1930s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993). For historic photographs and plans, see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893* (1894; New York: Bounty Books, 1972); James William Buel, *The Magic City* (New York: Arno Press, 1974).

11. This discussion of Cotten's early years is drawn from Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 1–14, which makes use of her extensive papers; both quotations, 3. See also William S. Powell, ed. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979–96), 1:439.

12. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 7, 4.

13. Ibid., 12, 14.

14. Ibid., 17, 17, 20.

15. Ibid., 24, 29; Bruce Cotten, *As We Were: A Personal Sketch of Family Life* (Baltimore: "privately printed for family only," 1935).

16. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 33.

17. Ibid., 37, 38, 40.

18. Ibid., 42, 46.

19. Ibid., 47–69; North Carolina State Historical Marker, NC-43 and NC-211, Bruce, N.C., USA; and Anne Firor Scott, "Sallie Southall Cotten," in Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, Paul S. Boyer, eds., *Notable American Women 1607–1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:388–90.

20. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 47–69, 57, 58; Scott, *Natural Allies*, 118, 217–18n20; from Sallie Southall Cotten to Kate Connor, August 12, 1884, SHC.

21. Lucy Cherry Crisp, "Useful Life of North Carolina's 'Grand Old Lady,'" *Charlotte Observer*, May 12, 1929, cited in William Stephenson, "How Sallie Southall Cotten Brought North Carolina to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893," *North Carolina Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (1980): 368. See also Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 71–87.

22. *Wilmington Messenger*, March 17, 1892, cited in Stephenson, "How Cotten Brought North Carolina to the Fair," 372–73. Alexander B. Andrews and Thomas B. Keogh were North Carolina's two commissioners, while Elias Carr and G. A. Bingham were the alternates.

23. Crisp, "Useful Life of North Carolina's 'Grand Old Lady,'" cited in Stephenson, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the 1893 World's Fair," 368.

24. *Wilmington Messenger*, March 17, 1892, cited in Stephenson, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the 1893 World's Fair," 372.

25. Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere," 196–209.

26. Ibid., 196–209, 224; Weimann, *Fair Women*, 28–43, 249; Gayle Gullett, "'Our Great Opportunity': Organized Women Advance Woman's Work at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," *Illinois Historical Journal* 87 (Winter 1994): 259–76.

27. See Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago, Architect and Planner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), chaps. 4 and 5; Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004). Daniel Burnham was in charge of the fair's architecture, and he invited Richard Morris Hunt, McKim, Mead and White, and George Post of New York City; Peabody and Stearns of Boston; and Van Brunt and Howe of Kansas City to each design a major building on the Grand Court. The five Chicago firms were Adler and Sullivan, Burling and Whitehouse, Jenney and Mundie, Henry Ives Cobb, and Solon S. Beman. Frederick Law Olmsted and Henry Codman headed the landscape design, while Augustus St. Gaudens and Frank Millet oversaw the art.

28. Because the BLM had official status within the Columbian Exposition governing structure, it was entitled to its share of federal funding, and in late 1891, $200,000 was appropriated for a separate women's pavilion; see Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere," 233. I have summarized the definitive account of the often contentious history of the Woman's Building from Weimann, *Fair Women*, 142–80.

29. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, July 8, 1893.

30. Field quoted in Weimann, *Fair Women*, 277.

31. Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere," 233–35.

32. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, July 13, 1893.

33. Disappointed that Palmer did not read her paper or make it a BLM project (Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, July 17/21, 1893), Sallie remained optimistic that it would be implemented (August 6). She decided that her fortune "For you I see a heroic effort and handsome reward," which she received from a weight machine in the Fisheries Building, referred to her Virginia Dare School (August 31).

34. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, July 31, 1893.

35. Ibid., July 22, 1893.

36. Ibid., October 11, 1893.

37. Croly quoted in Weimann, *Fair Women*, 503; Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere," 239–46.

38. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, September 10, 1893.

39. Although a site had been designated for North Carolina, the state did not finance a separate building but mounted exhibits in the Agriculture, Fisheries, Mines and Mining, and Horticultural buildings. The women had raised $4,000 of the required $10,000 and the male commissioners raised no money. Nine states did not erect buildings, six from the South. See Stephenson, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the 1893 World's Fair," 375, 379.

40. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, August 8, 1893.

41. Ibid., August 18, 1893.

42. See Rydell, "A Cultural Frankenstein"; and Pohl, "Historian Reality or Utopian Ideal?" Rydell states that deplorable health and working conditions contributed to smallpox at the fair (262–63).

43. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, August 3, 1893.

44. Ibid., July 12, 1893.

45. Ibid., September 8, 1893.

46. Ibid., July 15, 1893.

47. Weimann, *Fair Women*, 564–66.

48. Episode reconstructed from clipping in Scrapbook vol. 1, Sallie Southall Cotten Papers (date unknown), in Stephenson, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the 1893 World's Fair," 374.

49. Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere," 296–313.

50. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, November 3, 1893.

51. Ibid., August 1, 1893.

52. Palmer quoted in Weimann, *Fair Women*, 270.

53. Quoted in Weimann, *Fair Women*, 85. Felton, white supremacist and suffragist, chaired the board of forty-two women at the 1895 Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition.

54. Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 197.

55. Gullett, "Women at the Columbian Exposition," 270; Lydia Mattice Brandt, "Re-creating Mount Vernon: The Virginia Building at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbia Exposition," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43 (Spring 2009): 79–114.

56. Weimann, *Fair Women*, 112–13 (facsimile of the pledge on p. 124).

57. Cotten, Columbian Exposition journal, August 2, July 21, and August 15, 1893.

58. See Catherine W. Bishir, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1885–1915," *Southern Built: American Architecture, Regional Practice* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 254–96; Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 25, 41.

59. Gullett notes that exhibits in the Woman's Building presented a racial hierarchy, from blacks doing primitive crafts to whites creating modern inventions; see Gullett, "Women at the Columbian Exposition," 269–70. Rydell, "A Cultural Frankenstein," 249–66.

60. Quoted from Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 95.

61. Weil quotes in Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 82; Sarah Wilkerson-Freeman, "The Emerging Political Consciousness of Gertrude Weil: Education and Women's Clubs, 1879–1914" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1985), 50; Cotten quoted in Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 41.

62. Cotten Family Papers, SHC, reprinted in Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 42; see 41–45 for Cotten's early club work, quotation, 43.

63. Sims, "Sallie Southall Cotten," 39.

64. Cotten quotation from Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 105.

65. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 107.

66. "Robert Randolph Cotton [*sic*]," *Confederate Veteran* (October 1928), http://genforum.genalogy.com/cotton/messages/2195.html (accessed May 20, 2013); Wilkerson-Freeman, "Emerging Political Consciousness," 52–58.

67. Lingle quotation from Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 84.

68. Sallie Southall Cotten, *History of the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs, 1901–1925* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1925), 1–7.

69. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 111–27.

70. Quotations from Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 137–38.

71. Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 138; Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 103.

72. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 94.

73. Ibid., 129.

74. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 157–58.

75. Sallie S. Cotten, "A Line a Day Book: A Condensed, Comparative Record for Five Years, 1908–1912," May 5, 1912, in Sallie Southall Cotten Papers, SHC, quoted in Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 159.

76. Sims, "Sallie Southall Cotten," 54–55.

77. Stephenson, *Sallie Southall Cotten*, 171.

78. Cotten quotation from Sims, *Power of Femininity*, 43.

Annie Lowrie Alexander

"A Woman Doing a Great Work in a Womanly Way"

JAMES DOUGLAS ALSOP

Annie Lowrie Alexander was an early leader in maternal, child, and community health care in North Carolina and a successful professional and businesswoman in Charlotte from 1887 to 1929. She was born on the family farm in Lemley Township, Mecklenburg County, on January 10, 1864, and died on October 15, 1929, at 410 North Tyron Street, Charlotte, the site of her personal residence and medical practice since 1890. She was the first woman to be licensed to practice by the North Carolina Medical Association. For most of her career, she was the only female practitioner in Mecklenburg County and was always a strong advocate for the medical education of women. It is frequently stated that Alexander was the first southern woman with an MD to practice medicine south of the Potomac. However, Alexander's significance is found primarily in her conduct over the course of four decades as a white, elite southern woman and medical practitioner who stood out as an exemplar of community involvement in the New South.

Alexander was the scion of a distinguished Mecklenburg plantation family and a devout Presbyterian. She became an astute investor in the new economy of urban development and cotton mills, earning praise as a professional leader and civic booster in Charlotte, which with its surroundings was undergoing profound social and economic transformation during her lifetime. Finally, Alexander was a physician and the only one in the locality who specialized in the care of women and children. Her concern for the health of her community was multifaceted. The universal praise and warm-hearted benevolence showered upon Charlotte's "Dr. Annie" during her lifetime and afterward should

DR. ANNIE ALEXANDER

Courtesy of the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, N.C.

not obscure a more complex reality and legacy, firmly grounded in class, race, gender, profession, and time.

Annie Alexander was the middle daughter and third child of Dr. John Brevard Alexander (1834–1911) and Annie Wall (neé Lowrie) Alexander (1834–93) and the most prominent of their six children. The lineage was distinguished. Her mother was a granddaughter of Superior Court Judge Samuel Lowrie.[1] Her father was a member of a prominent landowning family of Mecklenburg County and a descendant of Revolutionary War patriots. He was educated at Davidson College and the Medical College of South Carolina, where he graduated in 1855. He and Wall married in 1858. During the Civil War, John Alexander served in the Thirty-Seventh North Carolina Infantry as a sergeant and then a surgeon.[2] After the war he was a farmer, general practitioner, and druggist in rural Mecklenburg County. From 1890 until his death in 1911 he resided in daughter Annie's Charlotte home and managed a drugstore for a period of years. John Alexander published frequently on local history, genealogy, and public and church affairs. He was known to be strong willed and assertive, and his writings were frequently polemical and strident, not least on questions of race.[3]

Annie Alexander was home-schooled by her father and by a tutor. Her surviving papers include undated essays on school topics including Roman and European history, the constitution of the United States, Shakespeare's prose, classical Greek, and modern French literature.[4] Alexander later stated that her father selected medicine as her career when she was fourteen years old.[5] Certainly, the elder Alexander aggressively encouraged his daughter, selecting the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia for her, and taking her to be enrolled shortly after Alexander's seventeenth birthday. As a consequence, in 1884 she had to keep her graduating age of twenty a secret, for this fell one year below the college's minimum.[6] Alexander's best subject was chemistry, where she was awarded 100 percent by her professor, Dr. Rachel L. Bodley, the distinguished dean of the college. The title of her final dissertation was "The Vascular Mechanism."[7] Alexander graduated with second-class standing but was one of the favored few awarded, by competitive exam, a coveted internship at the Women's Hospital of Philadelphia.[8] Her teachers included Dr. G. Gibbons Hunt, later president of the microscopical section of the Academy of Natural Sciences; Dr. James B. Walker, the noted Philadelphia physician; and Dr. Hannah T. Croasdale, who was beginning her three-decade tenure at the college as teacher of gynecology and professor of the diseases of women and children.[9] Alexander's principal mentor was Dr. Anita E. Tyng, a native of Providence, Rhode Island, the second vice president and recording secretary of the college and the physician-in-charge at the Woman's Hospital in 1884–85.

This was the golden age of the Woman's Medical College. Under Bodley's leadership from 1874 to 1888, the college supported scientific teaching and experimentation in all departments. The chair in gynecology was established in 1880. The next year witnessed the implementation of a rigorous three-year program with mandatory winter and spring terms. Annie's class was the largest in the college's history, with 110 individuals. Recruitment literature asserted that this was the highest enrollment of any medical school for women in the world.[10] A clinical lecture theater was constructed in 1883, and for the first time the college contained a space where women doctors could give clinical lectures to women medical students.[11] Alexander was an early beneficiary. Her first clinical observation was of a baby with skin eruptions; the second involved a woman with a blister on her ring finger. There followed cases of rheumatism, gangrene, fractures of the femur, heart disease, malaria, typhoid fever, bowel disorders, and much more.[12] In February 1885 she began her hospital outpatient maternity caseload. Letters to her father enthusiastically described in detail Alexander's experiences in postgraduate medicine. In November 1884 she observed: "I would not take a small fortune for this year in hospital work."[13]

The medical college attracted students from as far afield as Palestine, Russia, Denmark, and Burma, but few arrived from the American South. Ruth McCown of Gordonsville, Virginia, was Alexander's exact contemporary, but apart from McCown and Alexander the student body in 1881 included only four southern women, all from border states.[14] Nor did this pattern rapidly alter, for in the years immediately following Alexander's class there were even fewer southern graduates.[15] A study of professional career choices made by elite North Carolina women from 1865 to 1895 identified Alexander as the single individual who went into medicine.[16] It was not a popular choice. The isolated women physicians who did practice in the South before Alexander opened her practice in Charlotte were mainly, perhaps entirely, northerners who had migrated south.[17] As for Alexander, she attributed the decision to her father. John Alexander possessed the status and self-confidence to ignore convention. He possessed the wealth to support his daughter during her studies, her internship, and the first year of private practice.[18] And he did so—according to Alexander—because of his dismay over high maternal mortality in rural North Carolina. When male doctors confronted reticent female patients, the solution was to have women physicians.[19] This career choice was inspired. In March 1885 Anita Tyng stated: "I anticipate an honorable & brilliant one [a medical career] for her, because beside her mental accomplishment & good observing faculty, she has those other qualities of the good physician, dignity, gentleness, firmness, & a calmness & coolness in emergency which inspires confidence in others."[20] This assessment

of the novice MD resembled ones produced at the end of her life and career by those who knew her best. In 1929 the Mecklenburg County Medical Society, of which Alexander was a founding member and past president, concluded: "Her presence in the sick-room radiated love and kindness, and inspired confidence."[21] The *Charlotte News* wrote: "She brought into that profession such high resolutions and nobility of character . . . such proficiency in maintaining that warmth of relationship between practitioner and patient, that she became outstanding."[22] Alexander was always aware that medicine was an unusual career for a North Carolina woman of her time and status.[23] However, over time she developed coping strategies, a comfort zone, and the ability to exploit her uniqueness.

From the outset, Alexander knew she would specialize in gynecology and obstetrics. Her reasoning was straightforward: this was the only field of general practice in which a woman could earn a livelihood.[24] While determined to live and practice in the South, initially Alexander rejected Charlotte and all of North Carolina. She thought the location would have to be a large cosmopolitan center where there would be sufficient people of "liberal views" toward a woman practitioner. In her mind, the choices were limited to Baltimore, Atlanta, or Jacksonville.[25] Charlotte was untenable for a second reason: she would be an object of cruel curiosity and idle chatter.[26] She decided on Baltimore instead. In 1885 Alexander accepted the position as assistant instructor of anatomy at the newly established Woman's Medical College of Baltimore, sat for the Maryland licensing examination, and then opened a private practice. She aspired to achieve financial independence from her family, though initially she was unsuccessful.[27] In the summer of 1886 her career took a sudden turn when she dealt with a bout of ill health. Severe pneumonia and weight loss were followed by tuberculosis. Alexander attempted to downplay their seriousness, but she spent the winter of 1886–87 recovering at a relative's Florida home.[28] Then, in the spring of 1887 the following advertisement appeared in the *Charlotte Observer*: "A nice young female physician, Miss [not Dr.] Annie Lowrie Alexander, has located in this city ready to practice among women and children and consult about female disorders generally. . . . She has been educated in the best medical schools of the country."[29] The surviving papers of Annie Alexander and of John Alexander are wholly silent on this move. Alexander had either already, or would soon, write a fictional story about "Dr. Katherine Caldwell," an elite southern white teenager who tolerated ridicule, attended the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania at the behest of her physician father, and returned home to practice alongside her parent, slowly earning the trust of her birth community and finding inner peace.[30] The similarities are not exact (even though "Dr. Katherine" and

"Dr. Annie" shared the same physical characteristics and temperaments), but Charlotte and its environs were to be the setting for Alexander's life work and accomplishments.

Alexander found lodging and rented shared office space in downtown Charlotte until she acquired the capital to purchase her residence and office on North Tryon Street in 1890. Her initial objective was financial independence as a single professional woman. In 1888, the first full year for her surviving financial accounts, the youthful physician recorded 423 patient consultations and a total income of $684.00. In addition, she performed charity work valued at $31.50.[31] This was a positive, albeit still limited, start. Although her newspaper advertisements always emphasized the care of women and children, evidence suggests that Alexander initially took whatever clients she could get. Patients included adult white males and a few African American women. Most of the early casework was gynecological, but it included as well bilious fever, consumption, the common cold, indigestion, carbuncle, debility, and a sizeable practice in neurology.[32] Alexander was always a general practitioner with a regular clientele over time and over generations.

As a physician Alexander published relatively little, and all known publications fell within the first decade of her residence in Charlotte. This is surprising, for she continued to explore original research drawn from her practice and to present this orally at local medical meetings well into the 1920s. While there might be in these early publications something of the ambitious new practitioner eager to establish a professional identity, taken as a whole, they possess more the appearance of favors enticed from a junior physician who could not decline publication. Her first medical paper, on chronic inflammation of the lining of the uterus, appeared in her college alumnae proceedings for 1889.[33] In 1894 Alexander published "Uterus, Hyperplasia of" in the *Charlotte Medical Journal*, and subsequently, in 1897, both this periodical and the *North Carolina Medical Journal* carried her study "Menstrual Disorders."[34]

Alexander seemed content to research, to write, and to present without publishing, especially at meetings of the Mecklenburg County Medical Society, following its creation in 1903. Her surviving research studies included "Management of the Puerperinum," "Cervical Adenitis," "Symptoms of Lobar Pneumonia," "Summer Complaint" (1893), "Pneumonia" (1896), and "The Care of Premature Infant" (1914). Her last known research contribution was a study of three cases of tuluremia (1928, 1929), a serious infection transferred to humans from live rabbits.[35] As a medical author, Alexander was cautious. This was particularly true when, on rare occasions, she spoke far afield. In a presentation to the Charleston Medical Society on calcareous deposits in a young woman pa-

tient, Alexander was exceptionally careful, providing only the observed medical facts, offering no analysis, and denying that the case possessed significance.[36] This wariness stands in contrast to her conduct when addressing lay audiences on matters of health or community, where Alexander radiated confidence, vision, and expertise.

While interning in Philadelphia in 1885, Alexander acknowledged to her father that she sought both financial success and professional recognition in medicine.[37] In particular, she desired to be considered an equal within a profession dominated by men. Her personal papers include oblique references to early occasions when she felt slighted by colleagues in the Charlotte Medical Society. Alexander also collected stories of insults sustained by female medical students and practitioners and of the triumphs of women physicians.[38] Of greatest consequence to her was achieving respect and recognition within her professional peer group of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. In part, this explains why she preferred local presentations of her research over publishing or presenting distant conference papers. She also sought and secured local offices. Alexander was the founding first vice president of the Mecklenburg County Medical Society from 1903 to 1905 and its president from 1909 to 1910. Only close to the end of a long, distinguished career did she accept a larger role, as first vice president of the Women Physicians of the Southern Medical Association for the year 1923–24.[39]

Alexander's professional success was to be on her terms. Her fictional "Dr. Katherine" abhorred the thought of being viewed as "a masculine woman" and commented, smugly, that within her home community the "I told-you-so people are disappointed to find she has not put on bloomers." In 1895 Alexander asserted: "Women have a right to wear what ever costume they please. Men have no more right to say they shall not wear bloomers than women have to say men shall wear skirts." However, she subsequently observed a dark skirt reaching to the ankles was far more suitable attire, even on a bicycle.[40] Family members remembered Alexander as someone who was always proper, self-contained, and respectable. Modesty was essential for women of her class and race, and they demonstrated this attribute through personality, actions, and dress.[41]

Events of World War I reveal the interplay of achievement and professional advancement for Alexander within a framework of the socio-gendered roles of her society. The wartime development of Camp Greene placed the city of Charlotte in a newly established five-mile extra-cantonment sanitary zone. As was the case for all army and navy sanitary zones, the primary objective was safeguarding the health of military personnel. A secondary goal was improving the health environment for the general population.[42] The zone around and

inside Camp Greene was supervised by Major B. W. Brown of the U.S. Public Health Service and aided by a sanitary engineer. The pivotal role with respect to community health and disease identification was performed by a physician with ties to the medical community and knowledge of local conditions. Annie Alexander was selected for that position. In late 1917 she received two wartime appointments as temporary first lieutenant, medical corps, U.S. Army, and acting assistant surgeon, U.S. Public Health Service. These were rare honors and responsibilities for a woman physician.

One key task was a comprehensive medical inspection of schoolchildren within the sanitary zone. School examinations were considered the best method for mapping the disease environment in a locality. Alexander had long advocated compulsory medical inspection in Mecklenburg County schools, thus far without success.[43] Her objective was better child care, both preventative and curative, in keeping with standard advanced views within American public health.[44] Now she had the opportunity, the power, and the resources to bring about change. She made good use of these resources to benefit both the children and the military. Moreover, Alexander subsequently utilized evidence gathered in 1917–18 to lobby the county's citizens and local school boards for peacetime medical inspections.[45] There were notable achievements. However, what caught the attention of the local press, apart from the singular honor bestowed upon one of the city's own, was the fact that Alexander refused to wear khaki. At a time when every adult male, it seemed, was attempting to put on a uniform, this woman with a legitimate claim to one declined it outright. The *Observer* had an explanation and a quotation: "Dr. Alexander bears her honors so modestly that. . . . She declared emphatically that she would not don the khaki uniform, as she disliked to be marked in a city where she would be the only woman so appareled."[46]

In 1918 Alexander remained Mecklenburg County's only woman physician, but she never desired to be or ever acted as "the only woman." Her deportment, morality, and values were self-consciously in tune with her class. It was another woman from Charlotte's elite who got Dr. Alexander exactly right as a woman physician. Susie Van Landingham was the city's leading society lady and wife of its most prosperous cotton dealer. In 1896 she published a series of vignettes on notable local women. It is worth recording her evaluation of Alexander in detail:

> In our own city we have one who has proven herself a worthy representative of her Mecklenburg progenitors. Descended on both sides of her house from illustrious revolutionary participants, Dr. Annie L. Alexander has shown in the pursuit of

> her profession the same persistent will, courage and liberty of thought that actuated her ancestors. . . . [She] came to Charlotte to battle not only with disease but with diverse opinion. With a modesty that is impulsive and a womanliness that is emphatic, she has won for herself, through the power of thorough equipment [in medicine], an honored place among the fraternity and a practice that is both lucrative and successful.[47]

An astute, anonymous commentator in 1929 observed the same thread running through Alexander's life and linked her approach to the practice of medicine to her self-visualization as an elite, white woman in Charlotte: "Long has she wrought her good works. For more than 40 years she has practiced her profession in the homes of the people here, moving among them with a majestic dignity and a proficient touch which enthroned her not only as a medical expert of superb order, but as a woman doing a great work in a womanly way."[48] Alexander never departed from her community's perceived "womanly way."

Dr. Alexander's medical practice was lucrative. She also was a competent and successful businesswoman, so frugal in personal expenditures that after the deaths of her parents, she even took a lodger into her home.[49] From an early period she purchased real estate, a sound investment in a rapidly expanding city. At times Alexander owned as many as twenty rental houses and commercial offices in Charlotte, all personally managed. During the early 1920s her annual net income averaged $4,800. Of this, only $1,600 to $1,900 derived each year from her practice; the remainder was all rental income. Each year she reinvested the profits. By 1923 Alexander was selling off real estate and investing in local textile mill stocks. She treated herself to a fur coat in 1921 and went on annual vacations, including one to Alaska and another to the Grand Canyon. She lent money to relations and gave generously to charity, particularly to the Presbyterian Church and to medical missionaries. On the whole, Alexander was fiscally cautious, spent little on herself, maximized her savings, employed a debt collector to pursue unpaid bills from her patients, and used the tax code to write off the entire upkeep of her automobile, telephone, and a portion of her house maintenance. Alexander had already informed an audience of career-seeking young women that a well-established, hard-working woman physician in private practice could earn as much as $10,000 a year.[50] It does not appear that Alexander, by this point in her career, was attempting to maximize medical profits. Certainly, the surviving casebooks from 1914 to 1922 and 1924 to 1929 do not suggest she had a full-time practice (although it is not known whether these record all patient consultations).[51] This afforded Alexander considerable time for civic involvement and leadership.

As a progressive maternalist, Alexander believed women possessed a particular responsibility and unique role to improve society. Like many other American women in the early twentieth century, she focused her talents and labors on her local community.[52] Alexander's social traditionalism asserted that the highest calling of a woman was to be a mother. She was acutely conscious of the leadership obligations and status bestowed upon elite southern women. Alexander's vision of a healthy community was profoundly shaped by the profession of medicine but never limited to this. Gender, race, class, and profession formed a unified whole in her advocacy. Alexander's community—as a whole—was both her life and her life's work.

During her lifetime Charlotte and its hinterland underwent profound socioeconomic transformation and dislocation. When John Alexander married Annie Lowrie in 1858, Charlotte was an agricultural community of just over a thousand people, possessing a modest role within the North Carolina Piedmont. In the year of Annie Alexander's death, 1929, the city—with a population of eighty-two thousand—had surpassed in size every other urban center in the Carolinas. It was the nexus of four major railroad systems and the heart of a textile manufacturing region of 770 mills.[53] In the first decade of the twentieth century, Charlotte's boosters proclaimed that "one half of all the looms and spindles of the South are within one hundred miles of the city."[54] This was "an onward-driving, pulsating South in industry, agriculture and finances. . . . Charlotte is alive, aggressive, progressive. Charlotte citizens cooperate in matters which promote the civic, commercial, religious, and industrial welfare of the community."[55] This positive statement by the city's leadership glossed over Mecklenburg's long history of bitter industrial strife and the serious social and public health problems that had arisen with its burgeoning population.[56] Moreover, the declaration that Charlotte's labor was the finest in the country, "native, white, sober, industrious," ignored both the frequent strikes and the African Americans who made up 35 percent of the city's population.[57] Thus, between 1890 and 1930, Charlotte emerged as a large, prosperous center in the New South, prominent in finance, housing construction, and service industries alongside the mainstays of transportation, textiles, and agriculture. At the same time, it was necessarily ridden with racial and class divisions and serious contestation over all aspects of social welfare, from education to health.[58]

Annie Alexander embraced the new progressive Charlotte. Her lineage, education, and professional stature placed her firmly within the social elite, while personal investments in real estate and textile mills aligned her with the new economic order. She was one of Charlotte's citizens who was "alive" and "progressive" and who sought to enhance the civic, commercial, and religious welfare

of the community. Many leadership roles arose from her status, work ethic, and dedication. These included the rebuilding of the Presbyterian church, the creation of the Presbyterian hospital and of the Presbyterian College for Women, the establishment of the Florence Crittenton Home for unwed mothers, the bringing of the tuberculosis seal campaign to Charlotte, the support of the Young Women's Christian Association and the Alexander Rescue Home (a Presbyterian orphanage), the growth and nurturing of the city's Woman's Club, the creation of the Mecklenburg Industrial Home for Women, the birth of the Mecklenburg County Medical Society, and the founding of the Charlotte Co-operative Visiting Nursing Association.[59] Equally central to her conception of civic involvement, Alexander was an enthusiastic and proud member of the local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. In 1904–5 Alexander threw herself into the campaign to establish a local monument to Andrew Jackson.[60] This was Annie Alexander, a "Christian physician," an elite white southern professional woman, engaged with her community.[61]

What constituted Annie Alexander's community? Were there boundaries or preferences? Isolated comments provide clues. In a lecture to the Charlotte Woman's Club in 1912 on the importance of tuberculosis education, she condemned the city's African American population for inculcating and spreading the disease: "Their ignorance in regard to the disease is dense. They crowd together, sleep in the room with the sick one, who knows nothing of personal hygiene."[62] After many negative assertions along the same lines, Alexander then briefly added, "I have seen [the same] occur among the ignorant whites of the city," and she called upon the club to devise a practical method of educating "these two classes." The speech blamed African Americans, but clearly both they and poor whites were the "other." Alexander supported eugenics and believed that "the death dealing hand of nature [rightly] destroys the life of most of her offspring" as "the sick and the weak succumb to their insufficiency." However, "as we conquer disease we preserve the unfit, in saving infant lives we save many inefficient ones to grow to maturity to propagate their kind and become a burden on society." She urged the creation of legislation prohibiting the marriage of "the unfit." As she wrote, "Forbid the propagation of those who are mental, moral and physical defectives."[63] Alexander's references to Mecklenburg County's "poor, ignorant and dirty" conveyed a maternal, elitist, and professional requirement to assist but evidenced no affinity for them.[64] Moreover, there was a clear, implicit prioritization: in urging women to take up civic involvement, she wrote: "Women have more to do with the health and morals *of our race* than the other [male] half."[65]

Alexander played a pivotal role in the founding of the Co-operative Visiting Nursing Association, established early in the twentieth century to bring essential health services to poverty-stricken, disease-ridden tenant suburbs and adjoining mill towns.[66] However, it cannot be determined whether she offered personal service in mill towns, and their women and children cannot be identified in her patient casebooks among her charity work.[67] Indeed, the only occasion in the physician's long career when we know she was engaged personally with Charlotte's African American and working-class Euro-American populations was during World War I in the school medical examination initiatives. There were priorities; these were choices.

Alexander prioritized the health education of Charlotte's white middle-class female adolescents. From at least the early 1890s she served—for several decades or more—in a series of key hands-on positions: teacher of physical education at the Charlotte Seminary for girls; instructor of anatomy, physiology, and hygiene at the Presbyterian College for Women; physician to the YWCA chapter; physician at the Crittenton Home for unwed mothers; and physician to the students of the Presbyterian College for Women.[68] Combined with semiannual talks on teenage biology, health, and development to the mothers of the Woman's Club and her own private practice, this physician's presence and opinions were pervasive within an important sector of Charlotte's society.[69]

What did she teach? Alexander taught the importance of modesty: female modesty denoted moral health; proper dress encouraged physical health.[70] She emphasized the centrality of high moral standards and purity. In her casebooks, she did not hide her abhorrence when examining unmarried pregnant teenagers: they had let down their families and had let down themselves.[71] Parents were instructed to restrain, not cultivate, their children's imaginative and artistic faculties: "Cultivate & insist upon orderliness in all things. Fitness, self control, & orderliness are the most important."[72] Adolescent women should exercise body and mind, but they were susceptible to nervous prostration from excessive intellectual study, especially at the onset of puberty.[73] Though not a mother herself, Alexander taught the virtues of motherhood. This was "the crowning efflorescence" of a woman.[74] "I believe," she stated, "no womans [*sic*] life is complete until she is a wife and mother." Alexander used women's nurturing capacity to assert, "In heart and soul we [women] are all mothers."[75] Thus, as a progressive maternalist, Alexander supported the education of women and woman suffrage.[76] Women must be educated, not least because the community needed educated mothers. Social well-being, particularly family and community health and morality, fell more to women than to men. Civic involvement was indispensable. In addition to service clubs and charities, women should

be on all public boards that affected either women or children.[77] They were natural beautifiers and advocates for improvement. Members of the Woman's Club were advised in 1912 to urge authorities to enforce health regulations and to advance public education by sponsoring lectures and exhibitions on topics of community health.[78] In all her addresses and public actions, Alexander saw herself as combatting "ignorance and superstition." She employed the language of science. She was up to date on giving advice: menstruation need not be painful, hospital births were superior to home deliveries, and parents should provide young children with explicit sexual knowledge.[79]

In 1889 Alexander urged women at college in Greensboro to consider a career in medicine by employing the language of separate spheres.[80] Women needed a woman's help and sympathy because a "suffering woman naturally turns to [a] woman for sympathy." Some diseases peculiar to women should be, and best could be, treated by female doctors. Women physicians had demonstrated great success in treating childhood diseases because "there is an instinct in women that gives them an insight into the suffering of the little ones." In brief, "If women were educated as men are, they could occupy the same positions, do the same work, and do it more quickly. A woman's brain grasps an idea more quickly than a man's, as a rule. Her brain is smaller by weight, as her body is; but her intellect is finer, perceptions quicker, and power of mental endurance greater." A quarter-century later, when Alexander gave identical career advice to North Carolina women, she abandoned separate spheres and female uniqueness.[81] Now she emphasized medicine as a wise career choice for talented, intelligent young women. Many well-paid jobs existed in public health, medical laboratories, hospitals, and medical colleges, compared with the overcrowded and limited careers for women teaching in the humanities. At that time there were twenty-five women practicing medicine in North Carolina—a remarkable increase in recent years—and all did so free from professional or lay prejudice. Even in the South, a woman doctor could be accepted, "where she conducts herself as a true woman and physician should."[82]

Students at the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania had been taught in the 1880s that the qualities of each individual medical student would account for her success or failure in the profession; Alexander internalized this message.[83] In her writing, she emphasized the importance of individual improvement as a means to contribute to community well-being. Individuals had to accept the logic of science, take responsibility, and be engaged. As a Christian physician of her age, Alexander clearly believed that moral improvement occupied an important position in individual and community health. This was a vision of community health that was not dependent upon systemic change.

Certainly, institutions and agencies could and would be established: united community *action* was superior to individual, piecemeal initiatives. There was, however, no hint of economic, class, or racial transformation of southern society. She envisioned a future where her community would be Christian, moral, hardworking, prosperous, civic minded, and united. It would be united not through social equality but by a stable hierarchy. Benevolent, well-educated, social betters would both lead and serve.

At no time did Alexander reveal any concern that she invested her life savings in textile mills whose profits depended on an impoverished workforce of women, children, and men. How did this coexist with her well-known "compassion for the underdog"?[84] Her focus was on the individual needing care and education, not on a socioeconomic system. Other public health initiatives by women physicians in Piedmont textile communities possessed the same purpose and worldview.[85] Health care workers focused on practical health education for tenant and mill families, especially women. Education for individual mill families was expected to lead to self-help by that family in health improvement, the acceptance of personal responsibility, and forward movement for family and community health. Between 1890 and 1930 this vision dominated public health in the American South. Initial steps focused on the most "educable": the white, urban middle class. This is precisely where Annie Alexander began. Later, her advocacy for the Charlotte Co-operative Visiting Nursing Association helped place Charlotte ahead of many other southern communities in similar need. True to her own convictions, Alexander always asserted that the visiting nurse service possessed a significance beyond medical aid: "These people are bettered not only physically, but socially and morally by these visits of the distant nurse."[86]

Alexander lived through great change but always in step with southern public health and never out of step in Charlotte. In her frequent addresses to the Woman's Club her tone was confident, never judgmental. She was one of their own, in possession of what all agreed was valuable, unique expertise. For over two decades, Alexander occupied a key role on the club's health committee. That body was exceptionally active. There was, perhaps, not a club in the United States that during the first decades of the twentieth century could greatly surpass the time devoted by Charlotte's club members to health matters—individual, family, and community.[87] Not all credit need be assigned to Alexander, although upon her departure the attention devoted to health subjects did decline.[88] It is obvious Annie Alexander was in her element when among her own. Indeed, there is a striking correlation between the socioeconomic composition of the Woman's Club and Alexander's private practice. Her established practice was

overwhelmingly white and female, with a preponderance of elite and middle-class women—nurses, schoolteachers, and wives of accountants and professionals. Apart from her extended family, adult males had disappeared, and African Americans were virtually nonexistent in her practice.[89] It was, therefore, a particular community in Charlotte with which she engaged. Even pregnant teenagers at the Crittenton Home were simply wayward members of respectable white families. White middle- or upper-class women, with a noted bias toward adolescents, composed her center of attention. Within this community, Alexander labored long and hard, with notable results.

Following Alexander's death, her legacy within her family and the larger community became indelibly linked to the theme of heroic sacrifice. The "remarkable Dr. Annie," with "a rather heroic story," had sacrificed herself in order to achieve the near impossible. She renounced marriage and motherhood. She overcame steadfast prejudice toward women by the medical profession and southern society. This was accomplished by overachieving, by being better than any man and every woman in every examination she took, but at a personal cost.[90] This depiction holds intrinsic interest as a depiction of a beloved figure. However, a thorough reading of Alexander's voluminous surviving papers produces not a single suggestion of sacrifice. Instead, the papers reveal Alexander's lifelong concern for duty, service, and achievement.

Alexander was a single woman who idealized marriage and motherhood. In later life, she sidestepped questions on her unmarried state by repeating, frequently, the story of how John Alexander had elicited from his fourteen-year-old daughter a promise never to marry, for otherwise the family money invested in her medical education would be wasted.[91] It is unlikely that this was the whole story. Alexander engaged in at least one romantic interlude in Charlotte in 1888–89.[92] She permitted her fictional "Dr. Katherine" to dare to aspire to both marriage and a medical career.[93] All that Alexander was willing to state in her surviving papers was that while a woman's life was incomplete until she was both a wife and a mother, "some of us never attain to that completeness."[94] There were compensations. One of the babies she delivered at the Crittenton Home for unwed mothers she brought into her home and raised as her son.[95] She also raised and supported the seven children of her deceased brother, Robert, who passed away in 1901.[96] As a wealthy woman, she wore easily the mantle of family matriarch. Bequests to relatives in her last will and testament of October 1929 totaled over $36,000.[97] She sponsored a young Chinese Christian woman's pursuit of a medical education in the United States.[98] It was a full life with not a hint of sacrifice until perhaps the very end. She died, after a brief illness, of pneumonia, allegedly contracted from a patient.[99] On the day of her

funeral, a highly laudatory editorial in the *Charlotte Observer* stated that Alexander "came nearer filling the position of 'the community friend' than any other personality in Charlotte."[100]

Annie Alexander departed from Mecklenburg County for Philadelphia in 1881 as a shy, uncertain seventeen-year-old.[101] She arrived in Charlotte in 1887 recovering from severe illness and fearful of her social and professional acceptance. Physically, Alexander had fair, curly hair, blue eyes, and was so short she had to stand upon a box when performing surgery.[102] In temperament, she possessed personal charm, graciousness, self-control, and dignity.[103] When family practitioners began to exchange horses and buggies for automobiles, Alexander's father forbade her to follow the trend. For years thereafter, she was a distinctive, solitary figure as she carried out patient rounds in the phaeton drawn by her favorite horse, Conrad. Her father died in 1911, whereupon she purchased a Ford, improved her productivity, and took great pleasure in touring the countryside, sometimes with reckless abandon.[104] She was a true child of the progressive movement, for she appears never to have abandoned hope and never to have descended into despair. What was required was a clear vision and a strong work ethic. Annie Alexander possessed both.

NOTES

1. Eva Murphy, "John Brevard Alexander," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 1:15–16; Harold J. Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," ibid., 1:13. These two authorities disagree on whether the name of Alexander's mother was Ann or Annie, but John Brevard Alexander called his wife "Annie." See John B. Alexander, *The History of Mecklenburg County, from 1740 to 1900* (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, 1902), 133.

2. Murphy, "John Brevard Alexander," 15.

3. John B. Alexander, "Insane Negros," "The High Order of the Human Race Not Maintained," "Sin Has So Corrupted Our Natures" (undated essays), and "The Mixing of Races Should Be Condemned" (1886), all in John Brevard Alexander Papers, Special Collections Department, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Mss. Coll. 218, box 1, folders 13 and 15 (hereafter cited as John Alexander Papers); John B. Alexander, *Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years* (Charlotte: Ray Printing Company, 1908), 109–12, 237–9, 247–52.

4. Annie Lowrie Alexander Papers, Special Collections Department, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Mss. Coll. 247, box 1, folder 4 (hereafter cited as Alexander Papers); Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," 13.

5. James D. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie, Mecklenburg's First Lady Doctor," *Charlotte Magazine* 6, no. 6 (1974): 42. The late Professor Pendleton was the son of Lottie (née Alexander) Pendleton (1891–1980), who was the niece of Dr. Annie Alexander and raised in her household after her own father's death in 1901. Lottie Pendleton was a key source for Alexander's life, thoughts, and stories. James D.

Pendleton, private communications to author, October 2 and 4, 2009. See also the testimony of Alexander's nephew, J. Howerton Alexander: Ginny Thompson, "The Remarkable Dr. Annie," *The State* 58, no. 6 (1990): 14.

6. Annie Alexander correspondence with John Alexander, January 2, 1884, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1. The college did not establish entrance exams until 1887.

7. Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania Archives, Drexel University College of Medicine Archives, Philadelphia (hereafter cited as WMC), Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 1881–86 (unpag.), entries for March 10, 1883, and February 7, 1884. The thesis (incomplete copy) is in the Annie L. Alexander vertical file, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Public Library, Charlotte.

8. Of the twenty-six graduates in Alexander's class, fourteen were awarded "distinguished" status (examination grades of 760 to 793), five "meritorious" (grades from 704 to 741), and seven "satisfactory" (grades from 640 to 674). Alexander received 704, the lowest of the meritorious: WMC, Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 1881–86, March 8, 1884; *Thirty-Sixth Annual Announcement of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Session of 1885–86* (Philadelphia: J. Rodgers, 1885), final page (unpag.).

9. Annie Alexander, student lecture and clinical notes, 1881–83, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 12.

10. Clara Marshall, *The Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania: An Historical Outline* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1897), 69; Stephen J. Peitzman, *A New and Untried Course: The Woman's Medical College and Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1850–1998* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 38–39, 56; Anon., *Pioneer-Pacesetter-Innovator: The Story of the Medical College of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Newcomen Society, 1971), 15; WMC, Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 1881–86, entry for October 29, 1881; WMC, Rachel Bodley clippings book, 1870–86, 221, 243; Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, *Announcement. 1881. The Thirty-Second Annual Winter Session* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1881).

11. Mary W. Grissom, "History of Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia: On Adventure Bound, 1861–1934," *Medical Woman's Journal* 41, no. 12 (1934): 320–23.

12. Alexander, clinical notes, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 12.

13. Alexander correspondence with John Alexander, November 23, 1884, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

14. *Thirty-Third Annual Announcement of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Session of 1881–82* (Philadelphia: Grant, Faires and Rodgers, 1881), 17–20; WMC, Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 1881–86, entry for March 8, 1884.

15. *Thirty-Sixth Annual Announcement*, 4.

16. Jane T. Censer, "A Changing World of Work: North Carolina Elite Women, 1865–1895," *North Carolina Historical Review* 73 (1996): 28–55.

17. There has been no study of this phenomenon, but examples are not difficult to identify. For North Carolina, see the series of biographical sketches by Irma Henderson-Smathers, "Medical Women of North Carolina," published in the *Medical Woman's Journal* between 1949 and 1951.

18. Alexander to John Alexander, 1881 to 1886, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

19. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 42.

20. Anita E. Tyng to John Alexander, March 19, 1885, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

21. "Death of Dr. Alexander Subject of Resolutions," newspaper clipping of October 1929 from unspecified Charlotte newspaper, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 11.

22. "Dr. Anne [*sic*] Alexander," *Charlotte News*, October 16, 1929, 8.

23. Alexander to John Alexander, January 2, 1884, and Annie Alexander, "Woman in the Medical

Profession" (c. 1915), Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 1 and 5. See also the obituary notice composed by her niece, Mrs. W. R. Stowe, "Dr. Annie Lowrie Alexander," *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Medical Society, 1931), 164–65.

24. Alexander to John Alexander, January 18 and February 25, 1885, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

25. Alexander to John Alexander, August 31, 1884, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

26. Alexander to John Alexander, January 11, 1885, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

27. Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," 13; Alexander to John Alexander, February 25, 1885, June 8, 1886, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1. It was the Maryland medical license that allowed Alexander subsequently to open her practice in Charlotte and become an honorary member of the North Carolina Medical Society.

28. Alexander to John Alexander, June 8, 1886, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1; Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 12–13.

29. Quoted in Mary Kratt, *New South Women: Twentieth-Century Women of Charlotte, North Carolina* (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 2001), 12.

30. Annie Alexander's "Dr. Katherine" is published in full in James Alsop, "Narratives of Class, Gender and Medicine in the American South: The Dr. Annie Alexander Story," *Gender Forum* 25 (2009): 8–14.

31. Annie Alexander, patient casebook, 1888–89, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 13.

32. Annie Alexander, patient casebooks, 1888–89, 1914–22, 1924–29, Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 13, 14, and 15.

33. Annie L. Alexander, "Chronic Corporeal Endometritis," in *Report of the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Alumnae Association of the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, March 15, 1889* (Philadelphia: Rodgers, 1889), 53–57.

34. Marshall, *Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania*, 101. The paper was read by Alexander at the June meeting of the State Medical Society at Morehead City; see "The State Medical Society," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, June 5, 1897, 2.

35. Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3. Other papers, not now known to exist, were mentioned routinely in the Charlotte press. For example, in 1894 Alexander presented "Physical Training of Girls" at a meeting of the Greensboro Medical Society, and in 1899 she delivered "Causes and Prevention in Diseases of Women from a Sociologic Standpoint" to the Charlotte Medical Society; see *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 18, 1894, 1, and June 7, 1899, 5.

36. Annie Alexander, untitled essay, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3. A slightly altered version, entitled "Calcareous Deposits in the Lungs" (also in her handwriting), was copied onto blank pages of her father's last casebook; see John Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 7.

37. Alexander to John Alexander, August 31, 1884, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

38. Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 1 and 5; John Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 7.

39. *Southern Medical Journal* 17 (1924): 49.

40. Alsop, "Narratives of Class, Gender and Medicine," 11; "Should Women Wear Bloomers," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, August 27, 1895, 4.

41. The theme runs through her public addresses and essays. For example, Annie Alexander, "Fifty Years Ago" and "Dress," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3.

42. For a description of the Charlotte extra-cantonment zone, 1918, see U.S. Public Health Service records, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 90, Central Files, 1897–1923, no. 4266, box 470, folders 1917 and 1918.

43. Annie Alexander, untitled lecture on school inspection beginning "All thoughtful educators recognize," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 2.

44. For the context in North Carolina, see Frances S. Bradley and Margaretta A. Williamson, *Rural Children in Selected Counties of North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918); G. M. Cooper, "Local Health Work Under State Board Supervision with Special Reference to School Inspection and Typhoid Fever," *Southern Medical Journal* 10 (1917): 554–58. A summary of state actions in medical inspections, as of 1918, is contained in the Commonwealth Fund Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York, Commonwealth Fund, series 9, box 1, folder 1.

45. Annie Alexander, "Medical Inspection in Schools" (post 1919), Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 2. Alexander (like other advocates on this topic) utilized the statistical information that came to be widely circulated in Albert G. Love and Charles B. Davenport, *Defects Found in Drafted Men* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).

46. "Dr. Annie Alexander Is Real Medical Lieutenant," *Charlotte Observer* (undated—early 1918), Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 11. See also the clippings from unidentified newspapers: "Charlotte Lady Army Officer" (c. June 1918), "Dr. Alexander to Take Charge of Health Work in Charlotte Public Schools" (November 1917), and "Dr. Annie Alexander Able to See Patients Again" (January 1, 1918).

47. Mrs. John Van Landingham, "Women in Profession," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 20, 1896, 14.

48. "Dr. Anne [*sic*] Alexander," *Charlotte News*, October 16, 1929, 8.

49. The following information has been extracted or calculated from Alexander's personal financial records, 1920–29, Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 7 and 8. Apart from some information within surviving patient casebooks on medical fees charged, the 1920–29 financial records are the only ones now extant.

50. Annie Alexander, "Woman in the Medical Profession," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

51. Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 14 and 15.

52. Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 80–81, 93–99; Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Woman's Movement in America, 1875–1930* (Chicago: Dee, 2003); Regina M. Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Service: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 32–34, 58–61, 293; Marilyn I. Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

53. Mecklenburg County population reached 34,175 in 1880 and 55,261 in 1900, before further expansion. John B. Alexander, *History of Mecklenburg County*, 382; LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally, 1961), 138; Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 19–20, 90–92.

54. D. A. Tompkins, quoted in Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 92.

55. Hill Directory Company, *Hill's Charlotte (North Carolina) City Directory, 1932* (Richmond, Va.: Hill Directory Company, 1932), 11–15.

56. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 18–104.

57. Hill Directory Company, *Hill's Charlotte, 1932*, 11, 16.

58. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*; Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White "Better Classes" in Charlotte, 1850–1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caro-

lina Press, 1994). Public health is not the focus of study for either Hanchett or Greenwood, and the subject deserves systematic exposition. Important evidence for the twentieth century is found in the Mecklenburg County Health Department Records, Special Collections Department, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Mss. Coll. 224.

59. Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," 13; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 15–16; Irma Henderson-Smathers, "Medical Women of North Carolina," *Medical Woman's Journal* 56, no. 11 (1949): 40–41; Scotti Kent, *More than Petticoats: Remarkable North Carolina Women* (Guilford, Conn.: Two Dot Books, 2000), 94–104; *Charlotte Observer*, November 25, 1922, 4, and December 24, 1922, 13; "Pay Tribute to Dr. Alexander" (October 15, 1929), "Funeral to be Held Today for Dr. Alexander," and "Last Rites for Dr. Alexander Are Held Today" (October 16, 1929), newspaper clippings, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 11.

60. "Last Rites for Dr. Alexander"; Annie Alexander, "Historian's report for 1904–05," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 9. Alexander joined the Mecklenburg County Historical Society in 1893; see *Daily Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1893, 1. The best study of history, memory, and mindset for southern white women is Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). See also Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).

61. For Alexander's identification as a "Christian physician," see Annie Alexander, "Social Hygiene" (1912), Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 4.

62. Annie Alexander, "What Can We Do to Prevent Tuberculosis?" (1912), Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3.

63. Annie Alexander, untitled essay beginning "Eugenics comparably a new word," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3.

64. Annie Alexander, "Womans Aid in Civics," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

65. Alexander, "Fifty Years Ago," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 2. Italics added by this author.

66. Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," 13; "Standing Orders for the Visiting Nurse Association of Charlotte, N.C.," and "Rules and Regulations Governing the Nursing Service," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 10. *Little Visits with the Charlotte Cooperative Nursing Association: Highlights from the Report of 1927* (no publication information), Charlotte Woman's Club Archives, Special Collections Development, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Mss. Coll. 56, box 1, folder 7.

67. Alsop, "Narratives of Class, Gender and Medicine," 4.

68. Most of these activities receive attention, albeit briefly, in the works cited in n59. For others, see the *Daily Charlotte Observer*, August 29, 1893, 4, July 9, 1896, 2, and May 20, 1897, 6, and the *Charlotte Daily Observer*, September 19, 1908.

69. James Alsop, "Dr. Annie Alexander on Adolescent Sex Education" (forthcoming).

70. Alexander, "Fifty Years Ago," and "Dress," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3.

71. Alexander, patient casebook, 1924–29, 171, 180, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 15.

72. Annie Alexander, untitled address to Charlotte Woman's Club beginning "Our Woman's Club," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

73. Annie Alexander, untitled lecture on nervous prostration, another essay on a similar theme entitled "Neurasthensia," and "Fifty Years Ago," Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 2 and 3.

74. Alexander, "Fifty Years Ago," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3.

75. Alexander, "Our Woman's Club," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

76. Suffrage is mentioned briefly in Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 11. The education of women

and mothers was a common touch point. Annie Alexander, "A New Born Infant," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 3; Annie Alexander, "Menstrual Disorders," John Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 7. The educated white southern woman has been studied by Amy T. McCandless, "Progressivism and the Higher Education of Southern Women," *North Carolina Historical Review* 70 (1993): 302–25; Jane T. Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Elizabeth H. Turner, *Women and Gender in the New South, 1865–1945* (Wheeling, W.Va.: Harlan Davidson, 2009).

77. Annie L. Alexander, "Women Physicians," *College Message* (Greensboro, N.C.) 4, no. 4 (1889): 1; Alexander, "Womans Aid in Civics," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

78. Alexander, "Womans Aid in Civics" and "Tuberculosis," Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 3 and 5.

79. Annie Alexander, "Social Hygiene," untitled address beginning "The hospital is primarily for the benefit of the patient," "Fifty Years Ago," and "Indigestion Is the Pandora's Box of Human Ills," Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 2 and 3.

80. Alexander, "Women Physicians," 1–2.

81. Alexander, "Woman in the Medical Profession," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5. This lecture was originally written for delivery before an audience of women in South Carolina. Internal evidence dates that to circa 1915. Approximately four years later, the text was reworked for presentation before women in North Carolina.

82. A unique detached page of an address by Alexander on women in medicine, delivered to a South Carolina audience, c. 1890s, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

83. Marshall, *Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania*, 82; Alexander, "Women Physicians," 1–2; Alexander, "Woman in the Medical Profession," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

84. Annie Lowrie Wilson, "An Appreciation of 'Dr. Annie,' Another North Carolina First," Annie L. Alexander vertical file, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Public Library, Charlotte.

85. Patricia E. Hill, "Invisible Labours: Mill Work and Motherhood in the American South," *Social History of Medicine* 9 (1996): 235–51; Patricia E. Hill, "Go Tell It on the Mountain: Hilla Sheriff and Public Health in the South Carolina Piedmont, 1929 to 1940," *American Journal of Public Health* 85 (1995): 578–84.

86. Alexander, "Womans Aid in Civics," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

87. The archives of the Charlotte's Woman's Club in the J. Murrey Atkins Library, Mss. Coll. 56, are incomplete overall and missing prior to 1900; however, the active engagement with health subjects is evident. Studies of southern clubwomen have devoted only very limited attention to themes of health, medicine, and public health; see, for example, Joan M. Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Religion and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890–1930* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004); and Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 110–13. The topic is worthy of development. For two useful explorations of American clubwomen and health reform, see Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies and the Modern Farm Woman*, and Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). At present, our knowledge of the roles played by American women physicians of the progressive era within women's voluntary community associations is very limited; see, for example, Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Service*, 286; and Ellen S. More, *Restoring the Balance: Women Physicians and the Profession of Medicine, 1850–1995* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 79–80. A study of Alexander's actions would be an important contribution to the literature.

88. See, for example, *Annual Program of the Woman's Club of Charlotte, North Carolina, 1931–1932* (no publication information), Charlotte Woman's Club Archives, box 1.

89. Alexander, patient casebooks, 1914–22, 1924–29, Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 14 and 15.

90. Stowe, "Alexander," 164–65; "Funeral to Be Held Today for Dr. Alexander," *Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1929, 1; "Dr. Annie Alexander," *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Medical Society, 1931), 163–64; LeGette Blythe, "Old-Timers Recall Dr. Annie Alexander," *Charlotte Observer*, January 21, 1940; Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 42; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 14–16.

91. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 42, 62–65; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 15.

92. Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1; John Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 7.

93. Alsop, "Narratives of Class, Gender and Medicine," 14.

94. Alexander, "Our Woman's Club," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 5.

95. James D. Pendleton, private communication with author, October 4, 2009. Alexander had employed the unwed mother as her live-in housekeeper. By the time he was age three, the boy's mother could no longer raise him, and Alexander adopted him; see Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 64; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 14–16. The boy is called her ward (not her adopted son) in one obituary and ignored in the rest; see *Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1929, 1. In her last will and testament, Alexander referred to him as "my adopted boy" and assigned guardianship to her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William R. Stowe; see Annie L. Alexander vertical file, Charlotte and Mecklenberg County Public Library.

96. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 64; Blythe, "Old-Timers Recall Dr. Annie Alexander"; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 15.

97. Alexander, personal financial records of expenditure, 1920–29, Alexander Papers, box 1, folders 7 and 8.

98. Alexander, correspondence of 1920–23, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1; last will and testament, Alexander vertical file.

99. Dudley, "Annie Lowrie Alexander," 13; Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 65. Family tradition states that Dr. Alexander saw this patient on October 10, became ill, and died on October 15. However, the final patient consultation recorded in her casebook was for October 2, and no patients were identified with pneumonia in the summer and autumn of 1929 (see Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 15). It may be that the casebook is incomplete.

100. "Dr. Annie Alexander," *Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1929, 8.

101. Alexander, correspondence with John and Annie Alexander, 1881–84, Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 1.

102. Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 14–16; Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 42, 62.

103. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 64; newspaper clippings, "Dr. Anne Alexander," and "Funeral to Be Held Today for Dr. Alexander," Alexander Papers, box 1, folder 11.

104. Pendleton, "Dr. Annie," 63–64; Thompson, "Remarkable Dr. Annie," 14; "Motor of Dr. Annie Alexander Crushed," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 24, 1914, 6.

Sarah Cowan "Daisy" Denson

The Lost Matriarch of State Public Welfare Reform

SARAH WILKERSON-FREEMAN

On a freezing morning in January 1903, the state legislature debated a juvenile reform school bill while only blocks away Claude Baker Denson, executive secretary of the North Carolina Board of Public Charities, lay critically ill in his Raleigh home. During his thirteen years in government office, Denson had discovered child offenders as young as seven years old incarcerated alongside adult criminals in jails, prisons, and county road camps. He had spearheaded efforts to create humane alternatives for child criminals and, as he lay near death, read that "the joint committee of the House and Senate reported [the bill] favorably." With victory seeming close, Claude Denson made an unusual deathbed request—that his daughter, Daisy, succeed him in government office.[1] From that day to 1963, when Ellen Black Winston, North Carolina's commissioner of public welfare, was appointed U.S. commissioner of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the executive position of the state's charity and public welfare board would be held almost exclusively by women.[2]

Daisy Denson's 1903 appointment was an unexpected event that became the starting point for the systematic inclusion of women in North Carolina's state government—a first step in the incremental process of "feminizing" state-sponsored public service. The story of how Daisy Denson overcame barriers to wield power in government office also reveals how voteless white women used precarious toeholds in government to advance their collective influence on public policy. Denson's career as a reform activist bureaucrat further illustrates how the gender of a state official could play a critical role in redefining public social services and expanding government responsibility and regulatory authority. But for Daisy Denson, in that moment and time, her interest was not

SARAH COWAN "DAISY" DENSON

Courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

in magnifying women's political power per se, but in protecting white and black children from the abuses of southern state police power and its pathological manifestations.

Sarah Cowan "Daisy" Denson was born in 1863 in Pittsboro, North Carolina. She later recalled that "my baby eyes opened upon the brave stoicism of that generation immediately after the war and later in life I understood it." Her mother, Margaret Matilda Cowan, came from a family of prosperous rice planters and slaveholders from the Cape Fear region who took refuge in Pittsboro during the Civil War. Their extensive fortune in slaves and real estate was lost with the defeat of the Confederacy. Claude Denson, a Virginia native, graduated from the University of North Carolina before the war with special interests in horticulture and education. After service as a Confederate officer, he operated a botanical nursery and boys' school in Pittsboro to support his seven children (four boys and three girls, with Daisy being the eldest) by 1880. The Densons belonged to the Episcopal Church, and Daisy was a lifelong Episcopalian.[3]

Daisy recalled that although her family did not have much money, her girlhood "was filled with books and music, art and flowers, religious faith." In the late 1870s, she attended Norfolk, Virginia's Leache-Wood School for Young Ladies, a nondenominational seminary run by two extraordinary women, Irene Kirke Leache and Anna Cogswell Wood. Leache-Wood differed from the usual girls' finishing school in atmosphere and curriculum as it offered both classical courses (Latin, history, composition, and the arts) and nontraditional ones (calculus, chemistry, scientific and architectural design, accounting, and office management). One Norfolk man observed that Leache-Wood students acquired "something indescribable, but different from other women." Daisy Denson emerged from Leache-Wood, and her formative exposure to the interesting and fearlessly independent couple, with a strong appreciation of women's potential, especially her own.[4]

She returned to Pittsboro to teach in her father's private school but found it limiting. As she later recalled, "Teaching was about the only so-called 'respectable' opening at that time for those girls who had been bred and nurtured as I had been." In 1883, at age twenty, Daisy joined her father in establishing the North Carolina Teachers' Assembly (NCTA), an organization of female teachers and leading male educators. The NCTA successfully used this dual-gendered partnership to pressure the legislature into establishing a state college for white women in 1891. Denson was working with the men and women of the NCTA, many of whom also supported the Farmers Alliance, to develop strategies for progressive reform, and in the process she honed her organizational talents.[5] She preferred social and professional situations in which white men and women

interacted on a plane of mutual respect, cooperation, and equality. Rather than conform to the classic feminine stereotype of the white southern lady, whose presumed sense of decorum and mental frailty precluded her from possessing either "intellectual cravings" or "an active brain," Denson chose to value herself, first and foremost, as an intelligent individual.[6] Indeed, in a 1913 interview Denson stated that she "deplore[d] the present cleavage into strictly masculine and feminine social clubs, both sexes would profit by a more normal social life."[7]

Her strong dislike of gender divisions was validated by her experiences in single-sex organizations. In Raleigh, she served as secretary of the Wake County Memorial Association, joined the United Daughters of the Confederacy and, with the vociferous support of Claude Denson, worked to erect a monument honoring Jefferson Davis. She also became secretary of a small Ministering Circle of the King's Daughters, what she later called her first "regularly organized altruistic work."[8] While these "strands" of her life were valuable, neither organization fully satisfied her ambitions. Then in 1889, during the legislative rule of the Farmers' Alliance, the Democratic governor, Daniel Fowle, appointed Claude Denson secretary of the North Carolina Board of Public Charities (the Board), and Daisy began to find a broader and more public use for her talents.[9]

As a family, the Densons struggled to make a profit from the academy while Claude performed his duties as the Board's secretary. He collected investigative reports from volunteer county visitors. Intimate, disturbing details of conditions in the state's asylums, prisons, jails, orphanages, and county poorhouses permeated the Denson household, which served as the secretary's office. Reports told of "vermin ridden" cells, forced labor, and whippings of male and female inmates in the county poorhouses, or "Homes." In the Forsyth County Home, Denson discovered "one small room has an insane white man and two negro women in it. One of these women has borne a child or two since she has been there, and we hear of acts of criminal intimacy . . . and most scandalous indecency."[10] The state Board had no authority to force counties to improve conditions, so Denson published the reports and used accounts of race mixing to leverage white racism and pressure county officials to create gender-segregated facilities. Authorities responded by accusing county visitors of filing the critical reports for political reasons.

Presumably more scandalous was the imprisonment of juveniles with adult offenders. Age segregation was not practiced in the state's prisons, jails, almshouses (county "Homes"), and road camps. Since the early 1880s, Claude Denson had been organizing support for juvenile reformatories and enlisted the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the King's Daughters in the cause. In 1893 he drafted a juvenile reformatory law that was defeated.[11] Legislators

either did not understand that young boys, especially, were being routinely raped while under the government's care, or they did not disapprove enough to reform the penal system. For the next ten years, Claude Denson worked for legislation to improve conditions for the wards and inmates of state and county government institutions. He joined the National Conference for Charities and Corrections (NCCC), a force in the growing public welfare movement, and used the international network to amass information on alternative forms of incarceration and rehabilitation. Daisy often represented her father at annual NCCC meetings and handled his affairs and correspondence while he conducted investigations and traveled on business. She also served as a vice president of the North Carolina Reformatory Association in 1901. When Claude Denson's health failed in December 1902, Daisy performed her father's duties as the Board's assistant secretary. When Claude Denson passed away during the legislature's deliberations, Daisy simply carried on the work. Ten days after her father's death, she met with supporters of the reform school bill and monitored its progress from the Senate gallery.

When the bill failed, Denson diverged from her father's course and implemented her own ideas for reshaping the state's approach for the welfare and treatment of those in its care. While her father had appealed to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the King's Daughters, Daisy Denson reached further into the network of women's organizations, compiled the names and addresses of like-minded women, and pulled the organizations into a more coordinated force to determine strategies for the next legislative round.[12]

But Denson's succession was not a foregone conclusion.[13] In July 1903 the Board officially elected her its secretary, and Governor Charles Aycock accepted the appointment of "Miss Daisy" to serve in the executive post, thereby making her the first woman in the United States to fill such a position in state public welfare. Aycock claimed the distinction of being "the first Governor to put a woman in a public place."[14] Her election was unorthodox and arguably unconstitutional. State law stipulated that only voting citizens could hold public office—a proviso that seemed to render Denson, and all women, ineligible. But the franchise requirement did not apply to "positions of trust or profit," and the Board did not have enforcement powers.

It was now "Miss Daisy's" official duty to collect reports on charitable institutions and incarceration facilities, conduct personal investigations when problems arose, and inform local authorities of conditions. She met with and reported to the Board four times a year, recorded minutes, handled correspondence, and assembled summary reports for government publication. Board members largely left Denson to conduct business as she saw fit. She also re-

ceived her father's former monthly salary of sixty-eight dollars, which helped support her family.

Denson began to assemble a portrait of public welfare in the state from the sporadic and incomplete visitors' reports and inmate registrations and the cost accountings that were rife with inaccuracies. Most county home administrators were political appointees without professional training; many were illiterate or nearly so. As reports proved unreliable, Denson personally canvassed institutions to discern how many children were in the homes, asylums, labor camps, jails, and prisons. She embarked on a drive to "draft" women, using her list of club activists, to investigate conditions. Many accepted the challenge—as one woman discretely confided, they had "*knowledge* of the *necessity* of it." Denson gave information on state charities to an investigative committee of the neophyte whites-only North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs (the Federation), founded in 1902, and thus began a relationship between the state's public welfare Board and the Federation that defined the work of both for the next sixty years.[15]

Denson focused on formalizing women's presence in her administration. Prior to 1903, at the Board's behest, male and female private citizens visited institutions in their counties and submitted reports to the Board. The men, called county visitors, held meetings separate from the all-female auxiliary visitors. Denson requested that her female recruits serve as county visitors with the men and integrated the two groups.[16] While building a dual-gender local base, Denson also reached out to men and women in national social work networks. Hastings H. Hart, director of Illinois' Children's Home and Aid Society, encouraged Denson to study work in other states and attend NCCC meetings, prompting her to transfer her father's membership to herself and become the state's NCCC corresponding secretary.[17]

In the fall of 1903 a prisoner named Olive Clark died as a result of corporal punishment inflicted at a Mecklenburg County convict camp. Denson instructed her county visitors to investigate, and the camp supervisor was brought before the grand jury and tried in criminal court.[18] Stories of horrendous abuses at the county work and road camps had circulated for years with conditions almost impossible to monitor. The incident made Denson particularly concerned because labor camp managers claimed that they used the same methods practiced at the State Penitentiary. Superintendent of State Prisons J. S. Mann defended his prison's use of corporal punishment when Denson unexpectedly interrogated him. While incensed by her judgmental tone, Mann cooperated by informing her that 5 of his 714 inmates "appeared" to be under sixteen, implying that young delinquents were likely to be sent to convict camps and chain gangs.[19]

Denson clearly signaled that she intended to run a more effective operation than her father's, with a clever gender twist: by aggressively deploying female investigators, she made it more difficult for county commissioners to dismiss the reports. Calling respectable white women partisan hacks and liars violated the southern code of chivalry, inviting serious retaliation from husbands, fathers, and brothers, and it did not advance careers. When commissioners resisted her recommendations, Denson established her authority by citing article XI of the state constitution, which gave the Board the power and duty to inspect all penal and charitable institutions. In a thinly veiled threat, she wrote county commissioners that the Board "knows neither politics nor personalities . . . and looks with confident hope for the fulfillment of your good intentions."[20] While the Board still did not have the power to force improvements, the Board's secretary acted as though she had the power *to prevent* abuses and expected officials to comply.

She also persuaded Governor Aycock to give her an office in the Senate gallery's west corner of the Capitol, where she held meetings and monitored legislation. Along with the detailed reports on North Carolina's institutions, information from national experts accumulated in Denson's office, which became headquarters for the state's public welfare interests. From her place "just under the roof," Denson published reports of private institutions as a service to the public and lobbied the legislature to grant the Board the power to license private charitable operations.[21] The bill passed, giving the state Board new regulatory influence over institutions not funded by government, further escalating Denson's and the Board's interaction with women's organizations and private social service institutions.

Denson continued to professionalize the Board's work by streamlining a system for determining the number of youngsters in institutions and how many "defectives" (insane, blind, diseased, deaf, dumb, and "feebleminded") were in county homes and jails. The fact that children were growing up in asylums and county homes especially appalled her. Children entered institutions with their poor, injured, or ill mothers. Pregnant women were admitted, gave birth, and died leaving their babies in the custody of the state. More troubling was the discovery that female inmates became pregnant and gave birth while institutionalized. Such children were evidence of inadequate supervision of inmates and sexual abuse. White and black women bore infants under these conditions, but Denson especially noted that white women bore mulatto infants while in the state's care. All of the children were inmates by default and needed to be placed in private homes or more appropriate institutions. In light of these discoveries, Denson made it her goal to categorize inmates and seek appropriations to segregate all prisoners and state wards by age, race, gender, offense, and type of

malady (tuberculosis, epilepsy, mental illness, etc.). Separate facilities, rehabilitation programs, and juvenile courts could minimize the mistreatment of all inmates, but particularly women and children of both races.[22]

Denson began her reform campaign close to home by investigating Raleigh's Wake County jail. In April 1904, she exposed the jail's horrible conditions in letters to the *News and Observer* and chaired "a meeting of women to get up a petition for a new jail." She and her sister Mary joined with a leader in the Society of the Daughters of the Revolution, Elvira Moffitt, to establish the Raleigh Woman's Club, which quickly earned recognition as one of the state's most influential organizations. Denson chaired the club's Department of Charities and directed the study of modern social work methods, "child-saving" industrial schools, and juvenile courts. Denson later recalled that "all the strands of life seem[ed] to have merged at last into the appointed task, social service work"—work that focused on protecting society's most vulnerable and pursuing reforms that, as a government official, she had the power to implement.

In 1904, she also joined with several women who lived in her neighborhood near Peace College and the Capitol to form the Tuesday Afternoon Book Club, a small group of white women who met to discuss world history, culture, philosophy, and literature. This group became a tight support network for Denson as well as an intellectual outlet. For the next forty-one years, Denson was a beloved mainstay of the club. But in her professional persona she was a hard-nosed reformer and, in the guise of a bureaucrat, steered the agendas of women's organizations and the state Board.[23] Her strategic public use of religious rhetoric to justify her work somewhat softened that persona, but she seemed sincere when she stated that her happiness depended on her "obedience to the call." She was not just "called," however; she was angry as she studied the 1900 census and the National Consumers' League's "Child Labor Legislation Handbook" and noted that North Carolina was fifth in illiteracy. She also learned that compulsory school-attendance laws were enforced in all states except fifteen, and ten of those were in the South. She began to favor state legislation that prohibited the employment of children under age fourteen and restricted labor for those under eighteen to ten hours a day and no night work. Inspired by the NCCC's establishment of the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), Denson proposed to the Board that a "State Conference of Charities" be organized. She also bought a typewriter.[24]

In September 1904 Denson boldly continued her muckraking strategy when she published a compelling "Plea for Children" in the *News and Observer*. Through her "Plea," readers learned about an eight-year-old boy imprisoned in the Fayetteville jail. Denson protested that the state's age of accountability law

held "babes of eight and adults of fifty . . . amenable to the same statutes!" In Chicago and Denver, she noted, juvenile courts and reformatories "saved" child offenders, but in Guilford County six children had been sent that week to the convict labor camp, while six juveniles served time in the Durham jail. Women's club leader Sallie Southall Cotten praised Denson. "This work for children is peculiarly a woman's work and always interests them," Cotten wrote, "Heart and soul I am with you."[25]

At the 1905 legislative session, Denson focused again on a reform school bill. To legitimize the expanding public role of her female allies, she circulated an 1821 law in which the General Assembly granted the Raleigh Female Benevolent Society the right to plead in any court in the state on behalf of destitute women and children. The law also empowered the women to operate a school for poor children. Denson essentially demanded that the legislature recognize the women's right to establish public charities. She coordinated petition drives with WCTU leaders and sent these to the legislature. The Women's Association for the Betterment of Public Schools and the King's Daughters also lobbied. But Denson denied any "political" motives—she and the Board "only want what is best for the children and the State." Nonetheless, the bill failed. Ironically, Denson partially blamed women who lobbied for public school improvements, noting that if legislators had "scaled the educational craze sufficiently," they could have funded other institutions.[26] After this disappointing session, Denson vented her frustration by insisting that local solicitors and judges "back up the work of the Board with the strong arm of the law."[27]

Turning again to women for support, Denson addressed the Raleigh Woman's Club in June 1905 and presented a list of "need[s] of the State for which the women must work"—reform schools and institutions for the mentally ill and handicapped.[28] But organizing local women was clearly not a sufficient strategy. A national social work movement was coalescing, and Denson secured a scholarship to attend the summer session of the newly opened New York School of Philanthropy (later the New York School of Social Work). There she studied with "the greatest philanthropists of the country," such as *Survey* editor Edward Devine, and conferred with Owen Lovejoy, the Child Labor Association's assistant secretary. She formed ties with sociologists and social workers who gave her "practical insight," and she established contacts with national organizations headquartered in the Charities' Building with the school.[29] Denson returned to North Carolina with new determination. She requested the Board authorize the county visitors to make a "special investigation" of county convict camps and informed commissioners that they were required to cooperate. Some politicians, she told the Board, were forming "an opposition." In particular, Josephus

Daniels, editor of the *News and Observer*, "posed" as a "friend of the weak and invariably press[ed] them to the earth for political capital. Politics first of all."[30] To combat this, Denson asked State Penitentiary director J. S. Mann to go on record criticizing the chain gang system. Mann showed Denson's request to the prison board of directors, who advised him not to comply or he would be accused of trying to extend his jurisdiction to the county systems that profited from convict labor. Sensing danger, Denson immediately wrote Mann, "My letter to you was not in any way an expression of the Board of Charities. It was my own personal thoughts on the matter discussed."[31]

Her next move was more daring. Rather than submitting her yearly report to the governor, who selected what was given to the press, Denson sent items directly to the newspapers. Shocked by the press's knowledge of unflattering reports, Governor Robert Glenn wrote Denson not to leak such information again. In large black letters, Denson wrote across the governor's words, "The Board had a perfect right to give items about his report to the papers. [The Board] is nonpartisan and represents the people and the inmates of institutions and no one has the right to close the mouths of the members. Daisy Denson Secretary."[32]

As she continued to tabulate reports, Denson discovered a twelve-year-old girl, an incest victim, who was reported to be sexually abused while in Mann's prison. After canvassing county courts, Denson reported in October 1906 that "'alot of women and boys' [are] to be taken out to the camp as the result of the week's trials. I believe that it is illegal to send a woman to the Camps and certainly it is a wrong morally ['morally' replaced the crossed-out 'policy']." Responding to reports that an eight-year-old boy was serving his second term "on the roads," Denson exploded, "Contrast this with the law in New York [where] no child under sixteen is allowed to enter a jail or be tried publicly for any offense." At county convict labor camps, inmates slept in makeshift "stockades." Managers often failed to segregate men from women or children from adults. Sentences ranged from thirty days to ten years. Multiple terms were common. While other states improved their treatment of child delinquents, North Carolina's system of enslaving preadolescent offenders in convict camps expanded.[33]

As the 1907 legislative session approached, Denson prepared another reform school bill. Problems emerged as some politicians vowed they would never vote for a school for blacks while others swore never to vote to discriminate between the races. Confidentially, Denson told a close ally she wanted to provide for juvenile delinquents of both races but advised the Raleigh Woman's Club Social Service Committee not to be pledged "to one thing only" and instead to push the "most expedient." While county visitors and women's clubs circulated peti-

tions, Alexander McKelway, the NCLC's southern secretary, worked behind the scenes to locate funding for the school, and Sallie Cotten forged an alliance between the King's Daughters and the Federation to coordinate strategy. Denson noted that the King's Daughters had come around to wanting the "proper" type of school—one "established and controlled by the state." She called together legislators and clubwomen, and by prior arrangement the women passed a resolution supporting a bill to establish a reform school for white boys only. Some legislators promised to build a similar facility for black boys in the future. With these concessions to white racism, the bill authorizing the creation of the "semi-public" Stonewall Jackson Manual Training and Industrial School for white boys passed in March 1907.[34]

Denson hailed the legislation as a victory for children, women, and prison reform. In an article published in a national social work magazine, *Charities and Corrections*, Denson wrote, "The appropriation is only $5,000 per annum from the state, but the women . . . will increase this amount. The management will be in the hands of the women who will compose the majority of directors. . . . This is the first institution receiving help from the state with women on the board of directors. It is hoped that they may so demonstrate their ability to serve that they may be called to act upon other boards dealing with women and children. Another hope is that the object lesson of the reform school may so influence public opinion that a different policy in some respects may be pursued in regard to our prisoners." Not only had the women found a way to separate some white male child offenders from adult criminals, but the school offered education and training as alternatives to child labor in prisons and camps. Denson emphasized the school's maternalistic aspects of nurturance and protection. By providing a woman-run system, white women, as mothers and as advocates for children, asserted their right to protect young boys from sexual abuse perpetrated by black and white adult prisoners and jailers.[35]

Denson remained painfully aware of the need for more extensive reforms. The Jackson School represented unfulfilled promises as no similar facilities existed for either black boys or girls of either race. Hundreds of children, such as the twelve-year-old African American boy Denson found incarcerated in the Carteret County jail, remained in peril. Months after the school's establishment, Denson reported that she "was more forcibly struck than ever with the *rapid spread* of the county Camp system." Nineteen more counties had incorporated "the right to maintain either township or county camps and work their prisoners" into their road laws. More women and children would be sent to the roads.[36]

By this time Denson had been at her post only four years and limited her work to expanding the Board's authority over institutional care in asylums,

hospitals, county homes, orphanages, jails, prisons, and labor camps. She was interested in casework and outdoor relief only to the degree that these services, primarily performed by churches, women's clubs, and community charitable agencies, such as Asheville's Lindley Home, minimized the populations of institutions she monitored. She also knew that both mothers' aid and anti–child labor movements were energizing social welfare circles. In 1907, Governor Glenn appointed Denson, Mrs. Charles Webb of Asheville, and four men, including mill owner W. A. Erwin of Durham, as delegates to the National Association of Charities and Corrections (NACC) conference where these issues were discussed.[37] The 1908 NACC conference in Richmond, Virginia, left no doubt that southern public welfare advocates would have to either fight for anti–child labor and compulsory education laws or be dismissed as enablers of industrial abuse. Such conference speakers as Alexander McKelway and Jane Addams repeatedly criticized North Carolina's tobacco and textile manufacturers as among the worst practitioners of child labor. One speaker, Professor W. H. Hand of the University of South Carolina, stated that illiteracy rates for southern black children were decreasing faster than rates for whites, and North Carolina's white illiteracy rate placed it at the bottom of the other southern states.[38] As the state's public welfare secretary, Denson could at least report the purchase of land for the state Tuberculosis Sanitarium (for whites) and the breaking of ground for the Stonewall Jackson School. But minimal progress in southern states helped strengthen arguments for federal authorities to play a greater role in protecting children.

In 1909 Denson continued to pursue state-level victories and worked to pass a law that required males and females incarcerated in state prisons and city and county jails be confined in separate rooms at all times. But the law left the indiscriminant housing of prisoners in road-camp stockades unchanged. Grisly accounts of camp conditions moved Denson to unsheath her strongest weapon—publicity—as she shared details from sensational cases with the press and prison reform activists. While insisting that cases of "sodomy on an extensive scale," incest, miscegenation, and rape assaulted her sense of delicacy, Denson unflinchingly pulled away the veil of silence covering the barbarity of institutional life in North Carolina. Lucrative private convict labor contracts and the state's desire for good roads fueled the convict camp system. Local officials who arranged labor contracts had little incentive to change the system, which, for the most part, was in the hands of the state Board of Prison Directors and county officials who dismissed atrocities as isolated incidents.[39]

Modernizing the penal system would require complete reorganization: building separate institutions, hiring professionally trained staff, extending

state control over city and county facilities, granting enforcement powers to the Board and its secretary, doing away with patronage appointments, and increasing public funding.[40] In 1911, Denson tried a new strategy and drafted a bill to alter prison directors' terms so that they would not move in and out of office as administrations changed. She did not rally women's clubs to help her, but did, however, consult with the penal committee's chairman, state senator Robert Cotten. She and Cotten met with the governor and carefully explained "that there was nothing personal in the bill but a desire to take the prison out of politics." When the bill failed, Denson observed that its defeat was due to "a feeling that political factions were affected one way or the other."[41]

Movement on other fronts encouraged Denson as she managed to pass a bill requiring that a female attendant accompany women transported in ambulances to state hospitals. The legislature also established the Caswell School for the Feebleminded for which Claude and Daisy had lobbied for years. Caswell represented another effort to protect inmates from sexual abuse. When the school's boys reached puberty, they were released or placed in other institutions to prevent Caswell's girls and women from having sex and getting pregnant. While the language of eugenics was used to garner support for Caswell, Daisy and her father knew from experience that not all children born of "feebleminded" mothers were mentally impaired. In her letters, Denson not only stated her interest in segregating the sexes to spare the state the necessity of caring for children born in asylums, but she expressed a genuine desire to spare severely mentally handicapped young girls and women the confused terrors and dangers of childbirth.

It is worth noting that ten years later, North Carolina public welfare officials secured a law authorizing the state's sterilization of certain "feebleminded," insane, and "wayward" females. At that time, Denson wrote the head of the federal Children's Bureau, Julia Lathrop, "I don't care for this law but [Caswell's] Superintendent wanted [it] and [the] other men [were] interested in the mental defectives." Denson preferred strict protective oversight and gender segregation to prevent heterosexual activity, not just pregnancies, whereas the sterilization of female inmates simply hid and even enabled sexual abuse. As Caswell's inmates tended to be severe cases, the concept of consensual sex could not apply to these women. The idea that it could, she believed, was barbaric.[42]

By 1911 Denson had established a routine of working with local and national reform activists. She instructed women's clubs on prison reform, especially the treatment of incarcerated women and children, wrote to New York for "the latest" on child labor laws, discussed ways to reduce infant mortality with a Russell Sage Foundation representative, and applied this information by helping

local women launch public health programs. But public welfare programs had advanced in many states. Kentucky had factory inspection, as well as child labor and compulsory education laws for black and white children. Virginia, with an infant state welfare board, passed legislation regulating female and child labor. South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Florida all established juvenile courts. None, however, existed in North Carolina. Denson's anger and frustration with political obstacles grew as other southern states secured reforms that surpassed what she and the Board achieved. In 1912, Republican president William Howard Taft established the federal Children's Bureau, and Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Tennessee had organized official state social welfare conferences. Tennessee governor Ben Hooper offered to host a conference to bring together public welfare advocates from throughout the South to discuss a range of issues and socioeconomic problems.

Denson eagerly attended this first Southern Sociological Congress (SSC), modeled after the NCCC, and became the state SSC's corresponding secretary. At the May 1912 conference Kate Barnard, Oklahoma's commissioner of public welfare, exhorted public welfare executives to be "fearless and competent" on behalf of justice.[43] Led by Barnard, SSC participants vowed to work for legislation to abolish convict lease and contract systems, combat child labor and illiteracy, adopt "modern principles of prison reform," and improve juvenile courts and reformatories. One striking feature of the conference was the participation of southern black delegates, notably Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, and John Hope. The SSC's militant possibilities became apparent when a Vanderbilt sociology professor asked the group to focus less on the symptoms of poverty, disease, and ignorance. "Deal with causes," he demanded, "and expect opposition."[44]

After the conference, Denson threw her energies into forming a state-level counterpart to the SSC. On September 6, 1912, seven individuals known for their public service announced the founding of the North Carolina Sociological Association, later renamed the North Carolina Conference for Social Services (NCCSS), an organization devoted to the study of the state's "most pressing" social problems: conditions in industry, child labor, treatment of juvenile offenders, prison reform, and the "race question." Of the seven founders, Denson was the only woman and state official active in both the NCCC and the SSC.[45]

That same year, the "good women" of Kentucky crowed: "We have Woman Suffrage in school elections and our school system has been taken out of the hands of politicians."[46] Kentucky's hard-fought success inspired North Carolina women. Sallie Cotten and the Federation's Committee on the Legal Status of Women were shocked when Lieutenant Governor Thomas Bickett stated that it

was unconstitutional for citizens who could not vote to serve on school boards in the state, even though a few women had already done so.[47] The state Supreme Court then ruled that women were also barred from serving as public notaries. Dozens of female notaries promptly lost their jobs, and men took their places. Male politicians seemed to be punishing women's organizations for inquiring into their status and insisting it was less than what some women already possessed, including Daisy Denson, who had been a state government executive for almost a decade.

A coalition of organizations, notably the Federation, WCTU, NCTA, and the Women's Association for the Betterment of Public Schools, took up the cause of women's eligibility to serve on school boards. In January 1913, a Durham senator introduced a bill to redefine school boards and textbook committees as "positions" of trust rather than "offices," specifying that "women shall be eligible with men to serve in such places." The women launched letter writing and telegram campaigns and held a silent vigil at the committee hearing. At the NCCSS, Cotten called for those who cared about public welfare and education in North Carolina to support the legislation. "No one," she noted, "could fail to understand the wish of the women." In spite of repeated efforts to kill the bill, it passed.[48]

The school board victory came at a critical juncture in Daisy Denson's work for the NCCSS. Over three hundred people attended the first NCCSS in February 1913, and membership quickly rose to over five hundred white men and women, many of whom were government experts and academics. The agenda expanded to include social services for the indigent, aid to dependent children, maternal and infant care, compulsory education, six-month school terms, tax reform, good roads, and temperance legislation.

While Denson fought to safeguard black children in state institutions, she found it difficult to belong to racially integrated organizations as these inherently challenged her racist principles, especially racial segregation, which she used to expand public service facilities. In 1915, Denson broke with the SSC "on account of the negro membership." Indeed, her founding of the NCCSS may have been in part a reaction to the SSC's initial inclusion of black activists.[49] At the same time, some North Carolina African American women, such as Annie Wealthy Holland, were forging public policy inroads as home demonstration agents and education activists. With the U.S. entrance into World War I, a few black and white women in North Carolina worked together on war-mobilization projects, but Denson was wedded to racial separatism and racist attitudes.[50]

From its inception, the NCCSS recognized the crucial role of white women in social services and emphasized female activism in its committee and leadership structure. The teamwork of Denson and Sallie Cotten, chair of the "Women

and Social Services" committee, ensured that women would play leading roles in the organization. Cotten invited female club leaders and woman suffrage activists to join, and members resolved to "urge women to unite in promoting social service." Denson received a particular send-up in December 1913 when a Greensboro paper proclaimed, "Miss Daisy Denson . . . can truthfully be called the Dorothea Dix of North Carolina."[51] As a southern grandchild of the NCCC, the NCCSS declared itself a nonpartisan, small "p" progressive issue-driven organization, but not an apolitical entity. Though a great portion of its members—women—could not vote, they nonetheless shaped public policy. With the establishment of the NCCSS, Daisy Denson had further widened the door through which white women could enter and influence state government.

The Federation's role in building the NCCSS represented a stepping away from women's organizations' traditional single-sex "separatist" strategies of institution building and reform. By the same token, government officials involved in the NCCSS sought to empower their goals with the support of women's organizations. As an individual and public official, Denson had experimented with these strategies for some time.[52] But the NCCSS represented a self-conscious effort to form a policy interest group that crossed gender lines to utilize white women's political potential. NCCSS women expected the organization to help them obtain even greater political power for women and declared that they would not treat state public welfare policies, especially issues pertaining to women and children, as separate from the issue of women's disadvantageous political and legal status. Speaking at the conference, Sallie Cotten pledged to use her influence as Federation president to have women appointed to state and local education boards. After all, women in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Alabama already served on school boards. While she publicly insisted that "politics" and voting should be left to men, she also insisted that improvements in North Carolina's public welfare institutions and policies required that women play a larger role in government. Denson exemplified that vision.

But Cotten let her apolitical cover slip at the Federation's 1913 annual convention when Julia Lathrop, head of the U.S. Children's Bureau, held two hundred club delegates "spellbound" with her speech on the needs of the nation's children; and the state's supreme court chief justice, Walter Clark, delivered the second punch with his statement that children suffered because women had no electoral power. If women had the right to vote, Clark insisted, then education, sanitation, and child labor laws would all improve. Clark also warned the women that North Carolina politicians had been steadily eroding women's rights, and women would have to be proactive to prevent the status of women and children from regressing further. Cotten recounted that the women gave

Clark a standing ovation, and "question after question pounded the Judge from the floor. . . . [M]any seeds of legal truth were left to germinate in the brains of the women."[53]

As Federation women increasingly embraced mothers' aid and anti–child labor issues, Denson remained dedicated to prison reform and called for a unified state-run system for regulating road camps. At the 1915 NCCSS she told the audience that individual prisoners needed proper and humane care. "The duty is to him first," she stated. "He has a divine value." Denson reminded the conferees of the "too true" sensational stories in the daily papers, and then proclaimed, "These men, made in the image of the Divine Creator, however low they may have fallen, have a claim upon you and me. Christ has laid the command upon us to seek the erring. To leave the ninety and nine and seek the sheep that has strayed from the fold."[54]

While Denson deployed the language of social gospel reformers to rally support for prison reform, the proposed Keating-Owen federal child labor bill dominated the NCCSS's 1916 summer conference, and Denson's issues were eclipsed. Lathrop returned and spoke on "Organized Womanhood and Social Welfare," and participants resolved to support her and "the enactment and enforcement of a uniform [federal] child-labor law." Gertrude Weil, a Jewish feminist from Goldsboro and the Federation's first vice president, addressed the conference and asked the NCCSS to endorse a statewide "Survey of the Social and Economic Conditions of Women and Girls." Children's Bureau investigations of child labor in other states fueled movements to establish industrial regulations, but North Carolina manufacturers resisted such federal surveys. Weil wanted North Carolina women to conduct the investigations that Lathrop's federal agency could not. NCCSS's female leaders exhorted participants to engage in some of the fiercest political and legislative battles of the time involving the issues of child welfare, gender discrimination, and the exploitation of labor, especially the mistreatment of female and child workers. A transformation took place as clubwomen discussed the question: if children quit working to attend school, who will support them? Adult workers' wages would have to increase and single or widowed women with young children would need public assistance, also known as "Mother's Aid."[55]

A week later, the National Child Labor Committee held its national convention in Asheville, and Florence Kelley, Lillian Wald, Edward Devine, Lewis Hine, Henry Folks, Edward Keating, Alexander McKelway, Owen Lovejoy, and Julia Lathrop all attended. Lathrop remained in the state as the guest of former state Federation president (1909–11) Laura Holmes Reilley, who was a national Federation officer. Together, Reilly and Clara Lingle, the state Federation presi-

dent at the time, ascended the platform to denounce the evils of child labor. Lingle criticized North Carolina's ineffectual and unenforced child labor law and castigated officials for refusing to enforce compulsory school attendance laws. Federation clubwomen, she proclaimed, stood "solidly behind" Keating-Owen. That afternoon, North Carolina's U.S. Congressman Robert Doughton thundered his opposition to Keating-Owen on the House floor, arguing that factory work kept children off the streets.[56]

Shortly after the Asheville conference, Denson wrote Owen Lovejoy, head of the NCLC, to voice her opposition to the federal child labor law on the basis of states' rights. While federal regulation appealed to some southerners, Denson believed in state sovereignty—and she was a state official.[57] This placed her at odds with Federation and NCCSS officers who were developing plans to increase the powers of the State Board of Charities in anticipation of Keating-Owen's passage. Sallie Cotten warned Denson that while having a woman on the Board, perhaps as commissioner, was "a long step forward[,] . . . the women of N.C. must stand by her or she will be handicapped in her opportunity."[58]

In the summer of 1916, NCCSS president Alexander Worth McAlister Jr., whose father had been a Board member since the 1890s, launched a movement to reorganize the Board. McAlister worked with Denson to arrange a meeting between the Board and NCCSS officers in July to begin drafting legislation. Before the meeting, Denson assembled a portrait of the work that she, the Board, and county visitors accomplished since her father's day and suggested how to improve the Board's effectiveness. While she seemed to expect that the reorganization would increase her executive power, she also felt uneasy.[59]

On September 1, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act. The law prohibited the employment of children under fourteen and set a maximum eight-hour workday for children under sixteen. The regulations were set to go into effect a year later and to be enforced by a new federal agency directed by former Hull House resident Grace Abbott. NCCSS officers envisioned a state government enforcement agency that would work with Abbott's federal agency. The reorganized Board, NCCSS officers proposed, would also study "the causes of poverty and its prevention, instead of depending upon charity to relieve conditions after they have become fixed."[60]

Within three months, William McAlister Sr. passed away and William McAlister Jr. joined the Board. The younger McAlister seemed so willfully ignorant of Denson's qualifications and history that she wrote an explanation into the Board's minutes. In later years, McAlister directed historians to cast him as the "father" of the state's modern public welfare system, although Denson had pioneered the investigative work and fought to increase the Board's authority long before he came on the scene.[61]

From that point on, Denson began to lose influence. Personal circumstances played some part as Denson went to Philadelphia for eye treatment and could neither sufficiently monitor the proposal for reorganizing the Board nor perform her duties. When she returned, new revelations of terrible conditions in convict camps and prison farms occupied center stage. She discovered twelve juveniles serving time in a camp near Wilmington. The Board's chair, William Blair, received letters from a seminary student, who had worked at the Halifax prison farm, telling of pervasive sodomy and fights among adult prisoners over sexual access to boys. The state prison board and Governor Locke Craig buried the charges to avoid a scandal. After the shooting and whipping of a prisoner, Denson confronted the governor in his office and told him that those in charge would correct the bad situations or the issue should go to the people. When Craig exonerated the officers, she consulted Blair about "the best method to pursue." In a spring 1917 *Social Service Quarterly* article, Denson told the public, in thinly veiled language, that in the prisons and camps "young men learn from the older and worst types of men horrible and unnamable vices. A woman cannot tell you the immoral conditions." But she knew them because freed inmates had visited her. "They come asking through me, a representative of a State Board, to ask that North Carolina do one thing: look at conditions as they really are."[62]

McAlister began to publish his own articles to promote his efforts to coordinate "all the social agencies of the State . . . into one system" and create "ample facilities for . . . study and research" to ascertain conditions with "scientific accuracy." He further suggested increasing the Board's membership "to include at least two women . . . and the employment of a trained investigator of social service problems as an executive superintendent, with a staff of assistant workers and inspectors." Denson was shocked to discover that McAlister's proposals nullified the arrangement that enabled her to serve as secretary, but Blair and McAlister assured Denson that her position was secure. She lobbied hard for the public welfare bill, working closely with the NCCSS and Federation, and the act passed in 1917.[63]

The Board grew from five to seven members, and two women, Clara Lingle and Mrs. Walter Woodard, joined it. The new North Carolina Board of Charities and Public Welfare had inspection rights over the "whole system of the charitable and penal institutions of the state" and was required to publish reports, study social problems, and "promote the welfare of dependent and neglected children." A commissioner with social work experience was to direct the work. Official county welfare boards appointed by county commissioners replaced the county visitors. County superintendents of public welfare were to serve as the state Board's agents and administer indigent relief, serve as parole

and probation officers, oversee the care of dependent and neglected children, help the unemployed, and conduct impartial investigations for the state Board. The system also established a means of investigating and enforcing child labor laws as public welfare superintendents could, by law, also be superintendents of schools, but the appointment of superintendents was optional and sparsely populated counties were exempted.

North Carolina's new "county plan" was widely touted in national social welfare circles.[64] Denson thought the commissioner's job would be hers, but the all-male nominating committee lead by McAlister decided that the position should go to a man. Hurt and furious, Denson agreed to be temporarily employed at the same salary she had been receiving. Colleagues were torn between sending their congratulations for her work in securing the reforms or their condolences.

Within weeks of the passage of the 1917 public welfare law, the United States entered World War I. In this climate of concern for prices and production, David Clark, Justice Walter Clark's son and editor of the *Southern Textile Bulletin*, contrived a test case to challenge the constitutionality of Keating-Owen. Argued in the Western Judicial District of North Carolina, the case questioned Congress's power to "deprive . . . a father of the right to his children's earnings until they were twenty-one years of age." Grace Abbott and Alexander McKelway converged on Greensboro to aid in the proceedings. Judge James E. Boyd decided in favor of the father and barred the application of the federal law in North Carolina. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Boyd's decision, and Keating-Owen was declared unconstitutional on June 3, 1918, nine months after it had been put into effect.[65]

Within days of Boyd's ruling, the new Board elected Roland Beasley to serve as the state's first commissioner of public welfare. Beasley, a former state representative and editor of a Democratic newspaper, was also an NCCSS member and supporter of prison reform, woman suffrage, and Judge Walter Clark, but not a trained social worker. The commissioner would be a lightning rod for David Clark's attacks. Denson later conceded that the position needed a "strong man" and begrudgingly retained her position as secretary. As she trained Beasley, the Board decided to pay him substantially more than what it paid her, and Denson protested the inequity. Furthermore, the public welfare law had failed to specify that women serve on each county board. To prevent the erosion of women's welfare work, Denson suggested that Federation leaders ask clubwomen from county seats to tell local politicians "there should be at least one woman on the county Boards of Public Welfare." But the Federation's wartime president, Kate Burr Johnson, denied Denson's request for a separate Federation department designated for county board work. Instead, Johnson subsumed Denson's club

work under the department of "Community and County War Service" directed by Johnson.[66]

During the war, Kate Johnson emerged as a symbol of a new breed of southern white female leaders. An NCCSS officer and Federation president in 1918, she led a fight for equal pay and defended public welfare programs. After Denson worked to pass public welfare bills in 1919, including juvenile court legislation that effectively raised the age of criminal responsibility under the common law from seven to fourteen, Johnson was appointed director of the Board's child welfare bureau. The Nineteenth Amendment passed in 1920 and Johnson's leadership in woman suffrage campaigns translated into support from feminist allies who expected increasingly clear evidence of women's influence in government. Denson was interested in feminist causes and in 1919 helped establish chapters of the Business and Professional Women's clubs (BPW) focused on providing affordable housing and meals for single working women.[67] But she did not get drawn into battles over the federal woman suffrage amendment. Johnson's liberal feminist credentials were stronger than Denson's, and she was eighteen years younger and a working mother with two teenaged sons and a husband in ill health.[68]

In contrast, Commissioner Beasley had abandoned his wife in Monroe when he took the job in Raleigh. Ugly marital disputes followed, and he eventually divorced.[69] When he announced his resignation in the early spring of 1921, the Board's nominating committee of Clara Lingle and three men again defined the commissioner's post as "a man's job and a man's job only." But at the Federation's annual convention in June, the organization issued an enthusiastic public endorsement of Johnson and further announced that the women's Legislative Council had pledged "to take an active hand" in legislation involving "all phases" of state public welfare. The state's departments of Public Instruction and Public Health, along with Governor Cameron Morrison, also supported Johnson's appointment.[70]

Daisy Denson wrote angry letters to Board members protesting Johnson's candidacy. Denson had trained Johnson for the child welfare work and was incensed by Johnson's gall as she recounted how Johnson casually informed her during an office encounter that she intended to seek the commissioner's post. Denson had then told Johnson that under no circumstances would she work for her. Denson reminded the Board that even though she served as executive officer for fifteen years, "when the new work was added to the law it was decided by the newly organized Board that a man should be the executive official. This of course was a great grief and humiliation to me as I had chiefly made the work under the old Board. . . . But they wanted a man at the head of the office. . . . I

think to discredit my past work by placing a woman in now would be a humiliation which I should not bear. It was hard enough to give it up to a man." "I believe that there should be a man," Denson wrote, "a strong man who will be the real head."[71] The tragic irony of Denson's career was that her last official act was to defend the system of gender discrimination that had hurt, cheated, and demoralized her. Perhaps more tragic was that the very women she empowered and politicized had betrayed her.

Denson's protests made it easier for some Board members to hire Johnson. The nominating committee had spent months "combing" the state for an "available qualified man" as pressure from women's clubs mounted. As McAlister explained to Board member William Blair, who wanted a male commissioner, "This brought us up against the proposition of nominating Mrs. Johnson, in such a way that there seemed nothing else to do." However, her "inevitable" appointment was "tentative," McAlister explained, to the extent that Johnson kept herself "free from any influence like the legislative committee of the federation, and that she will look to our Board for counsel and direction rather than anywhere else." By forcing Denson into the "background," McAlister had stolen credit from her and set up Johnson to take advantage of Denson's weakened position. On July 6, 1921, Johnson became North Carolina's first female commissioner of public welfare. The Board also approved McAlister's motion to accept Daisy Denson's letters as her resignation even though she had not submitted them for that purpose.[72]

While the woman who led clubwomen deep into government made an ignoble exit, women's organizations across the state celebrated Johnson's appointment. The press noted that it was a "man's job in responsibility, and labor, and administration, and a woman of real energy and devotion and ability has been called to it, because there was not an available man in the state who possessed in experience and training the qualifications which she possesses." In truth, as Johnson told historian Anne Scott, legislators "were scared to death of what women with the vote might do, and one legislator was heard to remark, 'Well, we might as well put her in; she's pretty and won't give us any trouble.'"[73]

Johnson spent six weeks at the New York School of Philanthropy, strengthened her alliances with clubwomen, and enlisted help from University of North Carolina experts, especially Frank Porter Graham and Howard Odum (who was elected as the Board's consultant). Nell Battle Lewis, a journalist and admirer of Johnson, became the Board's publicist. Johnson's first year was extremely rough as unresolved problems of corruption, abuse, and politics in the state prison administration burst into a full-blown scandal. A group of prisoners filed formal complaints with the Prisoner's Relief Administration in Washington, D.C.,

describing epidemic sexual abuse of male prisoners at North Carolina's Central Prison. Although the infuriated governor "berated" Johnson for the Board's failure to clean up the prisons, she and the Board refused to be blamed for practices that had been winked at by numerous governors and informed Morrison he would have to do his own "housecleaning." Johnson also surveyed conditions in county homes and exposed awful treatment, especially high incidences of sexual promiscuity among inmates and superintendents who were "of little higher class" than their wards. But there was some progress. Vance County's female superintendent of public welfare, Mrs. W. B. Waddill, implemented a new and safer design for county homes and hospitals, which the Board adopted for statewide use.[74]

Johnson seemed to develop an intense moral conviction that rivaled Denson's determination to battle institutionalized evils and drew strength from her constituency of feminist allies who expected her to be a lady in shining armor, a champion for women, children, the poor, and the oppressed. But where Denson fought to separate male and female inmates, and investigated when mentally handicapped girls gave birth in asylums, Johnson and the Board instead pursued a policy of eliminating the evidence by sterilizing females in mental institutions and reform schools.[75]

By the time Daisy Denson left public office, she had been instrumental in establishing the Stonewall Jackson Training School, the Confederate Woman's Home, the Caswell Training School, the Epileptic Colony, Samarcand (a reform school for white girls), and an orthopedic hospital and had greatly expanded the state medical hospitals and insane asylums.[76] She had led in establishing multiple organizations dedicated to improving mental and public health and the treatment of wards of the state. In the 1920s, she remained active in the feminist BPW, and in 1923, local newspapers inexplicably announced that Denson had been admitted to the state bar, though she seemed not to practice law.[77]

Her legal studies reflected her unflagging intellectual interests. She continued to be active in the Tuesday Afternoon Book Club. There Denson shared her knowledge, experiences, and dilemmas as the first woman to serve in the executive position on a state Board of Public Welfare. She enjoyed this casual environment among loving and respectful female friends who also appreciated her sense of humor—a trait that probably helped her survive the pressures of office. Annie Kizer Bost, who joined the tight circle in 1917, succeeded Kate Johnson when she left the commissioner's post in 1930. Bost and Denson continued their Tuesday afternoons together throughout Bost's difficult years as executive of the state Board during the Great Depression. In 1934, a young Peace College sociology professor, Ellen Black Winston, was elected into the club and came

to appreciate the Tuesday Afternoon members as women of "unlimited horizons." In her eighties, Denson was still giving papers in her inimitable "charming manner." In 1944 the club was honored to have its third member become the executive of the state's public welfare Board as Ellen Black Winston succeeded Annie Bost.

In 1945, at age eighty-two, Denson finally relinquished the membership she had held in the Tuesday Afternoon Club since she and her friends founded it. After she passed away in June 1952 at the state hospital in Butner, an institution she had fought hard to support, Alexander McAlister Jr. did his best to ensure that Daisy Denson's battles to establish a more modern state system of public welfare and social services would be forgotten. When interviewed by scholars, he buried Denson's activism and reforms as if she had never existed except as an office secretary and carefully touted Kate Burr Johnson as North Carolina's first female commissioner of public welfare. By 1952, few of Denson's former allies were alive to memorialize her extraordinary role in North Carolina history. But records at the North Carolina State Archives leave no doubt as to her incredible struggles and critical role in bringing women into government and policy-making positions. Although she was not alive when President Lyndon Johnson named Commissioner Ellen Winston to head the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, one wonders what she would have thought of the expansion of federal powers and the fact that the trail she blazed for Winston continued on to Washington, D.C.

NOTES

1. Daisy Denson (hereafter DD) to Charles A. Webb, December 9, 1904, Commissioner's Office, Correspondence files, Department of Social Service Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C. (hereafter DSSP).

2. This chapter distills portions of my dissertation, "Women and the Transformation of American Politics: North Carolina, 1898–1940" (University of North Carolina, 1995), and new research that focuses on women's roles in developing state public welfare policies and systems. Most studies of North Carolina's public welfare history provide little information on the 1903–17 period, when Daisy Denson served as secretary of the State Board of Public Charities.

3. DD, undated typed autobiographical sketch, Commissioner's Office, "Subjects, 1891–1952," DSSP; Robert B. Raney, "Claude Baker Denson," ed. William Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 2:55–56, 230–31.

4. Anna Cogswell Wood, *The Story of a Friendship: A Memoire* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1901); *Leache-Wood Seminary Catalog*, 1880 and 1893, and an anonymous biographical sketch, n.d., Norfolk Public Library; Charles Van Doren, ed., *Webster's American Biographies* (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam, 1975), 18–19.

5. DD, autobiographical sketch.

6. Anastasia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 160. Sims only mentions Denson once in her book and simply describes her as a "Raleigh clubwoman," one of the founders of the 1912 North Carolina Conference for Social Service, and the only woman among the founders (115, 127).

7. DD, autobiographical sketch.

8. "Miss Daisy Denson," *Everything*, December 1913.

9. Raney, "Claude Baker Denson"; "Claude Denson Passes Away," *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 16, 1903; Correspondence file, 1850–1944, box 1, Denson Family Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

10. Claude Denson to M. D. Bailey, November 24, 1893, DSSP.

11. P. Caldwell to Claude Denson, July 27, 1892; G. A. Shallenger to Claude Denson, July 23, 1892, DSSP.

12. Mrs. C. E. Craven to Capt. Claude Denson, January 15, 1903; Mrs. W. H. S. ("Magie") Burgwyn to DD, June 6, 12, 1903; and DD to Charles Webb, December 9, 1904; DD to John P. Kerr, December 5, 1904, DSSP.

13. Aycock to Pou, February 4, 1903, DSSP.

14. "Resignation of Daisy Denson: First Woman to Hold an Executive Position in North Carolina," unidentified clipping (July 1921), DSSP.

15. Mrs. T. L. Hubbard to DD, October 9, 1903 (emphasis in original); and C. F. Coble to DD, September 22, 1903, DSSP.

16. Denson's appointment on July 3, 1903, inspired the men of the Board to include more women in welfare work. As Denson's minutes noted, "Upon motion of Mr. Blair . . . [the Board] agreed to add one or more ladies to each Board of County Visitors and the Secretary was instructed to send the printed notices to the ladies." July 7, 1903, Minutes of the Board of Public Welfare (hereafter Minutes), DSSP.

17. Hastings H. Hart to DD, August 19, 1903, DSSP.

18. DD, "Public Charities," October 14, 1903, *Raleigh News and Observer*.

19. J. S. Mann to DD, October 5 and December 8, 1903, DSSP. See Robert E. Ireland, "Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism: Joseph Hyde Pratt and the Campaign for 'Good Roads and Good Men,'" *North Carolina Historical Review*, April 1991, 125–57; Jane Zimmerman, "The Penal Reform Movement in the South during the Progressive Era, 1890–1917," *Journal of Southern History*, November 1951, 462–92; Herbert Stacy McKay, "Convict Leasing in North Carolina, 1870–1934" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina, 1942). Ireland fails to credit Denson with bringing abuses to light before 1914 and influencing the direction of prison reform. See Ireland, "Prison Reform," 149–51.

20. DD to Honorable Board of County Commissioners of Dare County, September 17, 1903, DSSP.

21. Quoted in Roy Melton Brown, "The Growth of a State Program of Public Welfare," unpublished typescript, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 29.

22. County Visitor Reports, Minutes, DSSP.

23. July 28, 1903, and April 14 1904, Diary of Secretary, 1898–1904; "Resignation of Daisy Denson"; June 6, 1905, Diary of Secretary, 1905–1909, DSSP. DD, autobiographical sketch, DSSP. Quoted from Finding Aid, Tuesday Afternoon Book Club, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

24. DD to H. V. Varner, August 25, 1904, and July 5, 1904, Minutes, DSSP.

25. DD, "Plea For Children," September 4, 1904, *Raleigh News and Observer*; Sallie Cotten to DD, September 10, 1904, DSSP.

26. DD to Hon. Charles A. Webb, December 9, 1904; Edward P. Moses to DD, January 11, 1905; and DD to W. B. Streeter, March 8, 1905, DSSP.

27. DD to Mr. William C. Hammer, May 9, 1905, DSSP.

28. Denson also became head of the state Federation's Civil Service Department.

29. Report, January 1, 1907; DD to Dr. James McKee, July 12, 1907; and DD to Owen Lovejoy, January 31, 1907, DSSP.

30. In this letter the word "Politics" was underlined and crossed out, a graphic expression of Denson's growing anger and frustration.

31. DD to Boards of County Commissioners, September 1, 1905; DD to Judge Walter Neal, November 26, 1905; DD to Dr. P. L. Murphy, November 30, 1905; J. S. Mann to DD, December 11, 1905; DD to J. S. Mann, December 14, 1905, DSSP.

32. Governor Glenn to DD, January 3, 1906, DSSP.

33. P. Bell to DD, August 8, 1906; and July–October 1906, Minutes, DSSP.

34. DD to Judge Walter Neal, August 21, November 7, and December 7, 1907; and DD to Mr. E. R. Preston, January 19, 1907, DSSP; Anastasia Sims, "Sallie Southall Cotten and the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina, 1976), 46–47; Sallie Southall Cotten, *The History of the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs, 1901–1925* (Raleigh: Edwards Printers, 1925), 23. See also Sims, *The Power of Femininity*.

35. DD, "Social Legislation in North Carolina," *Charities and the Commons* (later *Survey*), June 1907, 345; Lyda Gordon Shivers, "The Social Welfare Movement in the South: A Study in Regional Culture and Social Organization" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1935), 112.

36. Reports of January–July 1907, and June 30 to August 6, 1907, DSSP. Denson tried to get the boy released or moved to a facility away from adult criminals.

37. *Greensboro Daily Record*, May 22, 1907.

38. W. H. Hand, "Compulsory Education," *Proceeding of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections*, 1908, Richmond, Virginia, 338–46.

39. 1909 legislation, section 3917, article XI of the North Carolina Constitution.

40. *Baltimore Sun*, October 3, 1910.

41. Diary of Secretary, February 1911; *Quarterly Report*, April 1, 1911, Minutes, DSSP.

42. DD to Julia Lathrop, March 20, 1919, file 10,101.35, "North Carolina–R.I.," box 10, 102.2.1 General Records, Records of the Children's Bureau, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

43. Oklahoma's commissioner of public welfare, Kate Barnard, was the first woman in the nation to hold such a position. Numerous sources erroneously credit Kate Burr Johnson as the first state female commissioner of public welfare.

44. Lee M. Brooks and Alvin L. Bertrand, *History of the Southern Sociological Society* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1962), 13–17.

45. Margaret Clark Neal, "The North Carolina Conference for Social Service. The Record of Twenty-Five Years, 1912–1937," unpublished manuscript, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, 6; *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 16, 1912.

46. Alexander Johnson, ed., *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections* (Cleveland, 1912), 503–37.

47. Edith Royster served as Wake County's assistant superintendent of schools in 1912 and was the only woman in the state in this administrative position. *Greensboro Daily Record*, May 11, 1912.

48. Sims, "Feminism and Femininity," 45, 217–19; "Under the Dome," *Raleigh News and Observer*,

January 26, 1913; Cotten, *The History of the North Carolina Federation*, 61–62; Cotten to Moffitt, February 13, 1913, Elvira Worth Moffitt Papers, SHC. Sims's analysis implies that the women agreed with constitutional restrictions against women's holding office (see Sims, "Feminism and Femininity," 221).

49. Diary of Secretary, April 26, 1915, DSSP.

50. A reform school for black female juvenile delinquents, the Efland Home for (African American) Girls, was not established until 1921 and was principally supported by the North Carolina Federation of Negro Women. See Tanya Smith Brice, "Undermining Progress in Early 20th Century North Carolina: General Attitudes towards Delinquent African American Girls," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, March 2007, 131–53.

51. DD, autobiographical sketch, October 31, 1913; and unidentified clipping from a Greensboro publication, December 1913, DSSP.

52. In 1914, Denson also served as a founding officer of the North Carolina Society for Mental Hygiene. The other officers were men. *Greensboro Daily News*, February 24, 1914.

53. Cotten, *The History of the North Carolina Federation*, 65.

54. *Greensboro Daily News*, April 5, 1915. Quoted from the newspaper's selections from Denson's paper "State Control of Prison Camps."

55. Neal, "The NCCSS," 22–25.

56. *Asheville Citizen*, February 3–6, 1916; Laura Holmes Reilley, "The State Federation as a Social Factor," *Social Service Quarterly*, July–September 1916, 99–101.

57. DD to Lovejoy, March 28, 1916; Lovejoy to DD, March 30, 1916, DSSP.

58. Cotten to DD, March 16, 1916, DSSP.

59. July 11, 1916, Minutes, DSSP. Alexander McAlister Jr. was politically connected as the nephew of Elvira Moffitt and Adelaide Worth Daniels, Josephus Daniels's wife.

60. Quoted from the State Board of Charities, *Annual Report*, 1916, 7; Neal, "The NCCSS," 25.

61. April 2, 1917, Minutes, DSSP; McAlister to Roland Beasley, December 8, 1943, McAlister Papers; Andrew Dobelstein, "Public Welfare in the American System" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1973), 126–32.

62. E. C. Murray Jr. to Blair, September 14, 1916; DD to Blair, October 3, 1916; and Blair to DD, December 22, 1916, DSSP; DD, "The State and Her Prison Camps," *Social Service Quarterly*, January–March 1917, 27–29.

63. Alexander Worth McAlister, "A State Board of Public Welfare," *Social Service Quarterly*, October–December 1916, 108–12; DD to Blair, October 3, 1916, DSSP. For more on McAlister, see Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 4:117–18.

64. A. Laurance Aydlett, "The North Carolina State Board of Public Welfare," *North Carolina Historical Review*, January 1947, 1–33.

65. Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 135.

66. "Child Welfare in North Carolina," An Inquiry by the National Child Labor Committee for the North Carolina Conference for Social Services, under the direction of Wiley H. Swift (n.p.: National Child Labor Committee, 1918), 21. Adding insult to injury, one club officer informed Denson, "as far as the work is concerned, you are doing it. . . . [We are] very glad indeed that you are going to work with us." From Denson's point of view, she had enlisted the Federation in the cause, not vice versa. Mrs. H. W. Chase to DD, August 9, 1918, DSSP.

67. *Greensboro Daily News*, September 21, 1919.

68. Kate Johnson's husband, Clarence, passed away in September 1922.

69. Petition of Isabelle G. Beasley, Miscellaneous Records (CR097.928.3), North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

70. *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 7, 1921; DD to Mrs. J. W. Pless, June 21, 1921, DSSP.

71. DD to Mrs. J. W. Pless, June 21, 1921, DSSP.

72. McAlister to Blair, June 20, 1921; and McAlister to Kate Johnson, July 7, 1921, and June 21, 1937, McAlister Papers; Minutes, July 6, 1921; *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 7, 1921.

73. Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 207n38, quoted from Scott's 1963 interview with Kate Burr Johnson.

74. Dobelstein, "Public Welfare," 137–38; April and May, 1923 Minutes, DSSP; Roy M. Brown, *Public Poor Relief in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 100, 118; November 10, 1926, Minutes, DSSP.

75. See Johanna Schoen, *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

76. "Miss Daisy Denson Resigns State Position," *Charlotte Observer*, July 17, 1921.

77. Denson was one of three women, all from Raleigh (Mabel Alice Peele and Mary Johnson Thighen), who were licensed to practice law after passing the exam. *Winston-Salem Journal*, August 25, 1923.

Sarah Dudley Pettey

"A New Age Woman" and the Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in North Carolina

ELIZABETH LUNDEEN

"There has been a tendency for centuries remote to crush the aspirations of womanhood, if those aspirations rose above the level of the common housewife. It was thought that her mission was to prepare the food, sweep the house, mend the clothes and rock the cradle. Well this may have been the height of the Colonial dame's ambition; but the nineteenth century chronicles the advent of the new woman. She is a creature to be admired, for she is an all around woman."[1] In 1896 Sarah E. C. Dudley Pettey penned these words for her "Woman's Column," published weekly in the *Star of Zion*, the respected organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. An African American woman born into the first generation of freedom, Dudley Pettey demonstrated through her writing that black women were speaking out on women's equality, both within the church and in society at large. Indeed, her affirmation of the late nineteenth-century "all around woman"—a woman who concerned herself with both private and public affairs—signaled that women's entry into the public sphere was hardly the purview of white women only.

The "all around woman," Sarah Dudley Pettey believed, was necessarily attuned to the struggle for racial equality as well. She refused to see the advancement of women and the advancement of African Americans as mutually exclusive goals. Instead, she viewed her work toward these ends as intertwined. Like many of her contemporaries in North Carolina's growing black middle class, Dudley Pettey envisioned the path to racial equality as an upward climb. African American leaders could stand as examples to their struggling brothers and sisters and lift them up, thereby contributing to the improvement of the entire race. Educated, industrious, and pious African Americans would prove to

SARAH DUDLEY PETTEY

From James Walker Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (New York: AME Zion Book Concern, 1895), 539. Scan courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

whites that they were deserving of equal citizenship and nothing less. Achieving this became increasingly important as southern whites sought to disfranchise black voters and silence their voices. Because Sarah Dudley Pettey saw women as worthy participants in public affairs, she viewed them as integral partners in the quest to refashion American society as color-blind.

Dudley Pettey lived during a transitional period for African Americans in North Carolina, bounded on one side by the end of Reconstruction and on the other by the enactment of Jim Crow laws, codifying white supremacy in the late 1890s and early 1900s. At the beginning of her career as a staff writer for the *Star*, African Americans in the state had reason to be hopeful for their future. Electoral victories by a fusion of Republican and Populist candidates, who cooperated in an effort to defeat Democrats at the state level, gave black North Carolinians reason to be optimistic. These so-called Fusionists enacted a series of laws increasing funding for public education and taking steps to multiply the number of registered voters in the state. Both reforms benefited African Americans immeasurably, with black schools springing up and the number of black officeholders reaching new heights since the days of Reconstruction. But African Americans' hopes were quickly dashed as white supremacists moved to dismantle Fusionist reforms in the election of 1898. As black North Carolinians faced disfranchisement, Sarah Dudley Pettey struggled to re-envision her world without electoral politics. Her life provides a lens through which to view the transition in black leaders' strategies for "racial progress." Although she did not live to see the end of this transition, Sarah Dudley Pettey's promotion of women's public work and middle-class values served as an inspiration to subsequent black leaders who fought to secure improvements, however meager, for African Americans during the nadir of race relations in North Carolina.

Sarah E. C. Dudley was born on November 9, 1869, to Edward and Caroline Dudley in New Bern, North Carolina.[2] Under slavery, Edward had labored as a foreman in a tobacco factory in Salisbury. Emancipated at the close of the Civil War, Edward began work as a cooper in New Bern, and soon after he entered public service as a member of the local police force. Edward served as an elected official during Reconstruction, first as a city marshal and then as a local magistrate. Sometime between 1862 and 1868 he met and married Caroline. She, too, had lived under slavery, though she was said to have enjoyed certain privileges, such as learning to read and write in the "great house." Despite the brutalities of slavery, Edward had also learned to read and write from his mother, Sarah's namesake. In 1870, a year after Sarah's birth, Edward was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives.[3]

Like many formerly enslaved people, Edward and Caroline placed primary importance on the education of their children. Sarah, the eldest of eight, learned to read and write from her mother and paternal grandmother, who lived with the family. Armed with literacy skills before she reached the age of six, Sarah entered the local graded school and, after finishing the program, moved onto the State Normal School at New Bern.[4] Both the local graded school and the State Normal represented educational opportunities available for African Americans in the state. Formerly enslaved people as well as northern missionaries were responsible for establishing several private schools. By the time Sarah entered the classroom, the state was also directing public funds toward the education of black children. In her time at the State Normal, Sarah followed a teacher-training curriculum designed to produce capable African American instructors to staff the state's public schools. Training black teachers to teach black children was a cause that even white segregationists could support, for it ensured the extension of the color line into the classroom. By the time Sarah entered her teenage years, she had completed all the secondary public education available to her. At thirteen, she entered Scotia Seminary, the Presbyterian school for women in Concord, North Carolina, more than two hundred miles from her hometown.[5]

The founders of Scotia, members of the Northern Presbyterian Church, took as their model Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Presbyterians aimed to create a sister school to Charlotte's all-male Biddle Institute, and both schools opened their doors in 1867. Along with several other denominational schools for African Americans established in the wake of the Civil War, Scotia was intended to educate newly freed people and prepare them for leadership. Northern founders had in mind a classical liberal arts curriculum, with courses ranging broadly from Latin and English literature to astronomy and physics. Some of these schools founded by northern missionaries were called colleges, but given the limited education available previously to black southerners, most institutions had to begin with elementary and high school programs in order to prepare students for advanced courses. Unlike the American Baptists' Shaw University in Raleigh and the AME Zion's Livingstone College in Salisbury, which were both coeducational, Scotia's students were all female. Accordingly, the school also offered classes in cooking and needlework, but its female students did not receive short shrift in terms of academic rigor. Like nearby Livingstone, Scotia pledged to educate the "Head, Heart, and Hands." Scotia women would learn to be fine ladies, but they would also become knowledgeable teachers and leaders of their race.[6]

In her two years at Scotia, Sarah Dudley rounded out her normal education, preparing her for a career as a teacher. In 1883 she graduated with distinction

and returned to New Bern to serve as second assistant at the local graded school. The next year she was promoted to vice principal.[7] Scotia prepared Sarah for a career in teaching, which offered a higher wage than most other professions open to black women. In addition to this tangible benefit, Sarah's time at Scotia also afforded her the opportunity to interact with other members of North Carolina's growing black middle class. To be sure, not all students at Scotia came from middling backgrounds. Regardless of the social standing of its students when they entered, Scotia aimed to produce female graduates who were well versed in the classics, not to train domestic workers to work in white homes. What is more, Scotia's founders intended to inculcate young women with the "zeal to serve others," a motto which implied some distance between the college-educated graduates and other members of their race. Educated African Americans, armed with college degrees, may have thought of themselves as superior to the "black masses." At the same time, white northerners who constituted a large portion of the institutions' early teaching forces taught their pupils to hold their heads high, reminding them that intellect was not determined by the color of one's skin.[8]

As a teacher, Sarah Dudley passed on these lessons to her pupils in New Bern. During the summers she served as an instructor in the Craven County Teachers' Institute, contributing to the overall goal of educating the race by training black teachers.[9] Colleagues and pupils alike applauded her skills. A "model teacher," Dudley "ruled with kindness and love, and punished with a flash of her eye." In 1889, as Sarah celebrated her twentieth birthday, she also marked her sixth and final year as a teacher, for she left her position upon her marriage to Charles Calvin Pettey.[10] Long after her departure from the classroom, Sarah received requests for her teaching expertise from high schools and normal institutes across the state, indicating not only her pedagogic skills but also the need for black teachers in North Carolina.[11] Sarah Dudley's educational experience reflects the value African Americans placed on education; it also speaks to the educational resources available to blacks in North Carolina, in no small part due to their own efforts. Sarah's higher educational experience at an institution charged with teaching Victorian values and morals also signaled her entry into a small but growing African American middle class. And Sarah's marriage to Charles, a young bishop in the AME Zion Church, further cemented her place within this group, composed largely of teachers and preachers.

Born into slavery in Wilkes County in 1849 Charles Calvin Pettey worked as a farmhand until he was emancipated shortly after his sixteenth birthday. Charles continued to labor on the land, but he also acquired training as a cobbler and basketmaker. Using his homemade shoes as currency, Charles bartered

for literacy lessons and then taught others to read and write. Shortly thereafter, Charles discovered the AME Zion faith and, under the direction of Bishop James Walker Hood, became a preacher. He then departed for Charlotte, where he began his education at the Biddle Institute. Throughout his years at Biddle, Charles traveled the nearby "country circuits," gaining experience as a preacher and earning enough money to pay his room and board. In 1878 he graduated with "highest honors" and took a position as a school principal in Charlotte. Once elected as an elder in the Church, he left his position at the school and pursued the ministry full time. Before departing Charlotte for his many missions, Charles met and married his first wife, Lula, who happened to be Sarah's roommate at Scotia. The couple had two daughters and moved frequently so that Charles could serve his many appointments. After Lula passed away in 1887, Charles secured a position as a bishop in his home state of North Carolina, and he moved to New Bern with their two children.[12]

When Charles arrived in New Bern, he found Sarah Dudley active in the local AME Zion Church. The two quickly rekindled their friendship, fell in love, and married in September 1889. Meanwhile, Charles received an assignment to assume responsibilities for the Church's western district, covering Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and California. The newlyweds departed North Carolina on this adventure, Sarah taking on the role of her husband's private secretary.[13] It is a sign of the Petteys' relative wealth that Sarah was able to give up her career after marrying Charles. Many African American partnerships could not survive financially on one income alone.

Over the next few years, Sarah and Charles traveled extensively on church business, routinely crossing the country by train and even venturing to Europe by steamship. Sarah kept a journal of the couple's travel experiences and submitted a selection detailing their Atlantic crossing to a volume celebrating the achievements of African American women, published in 1893.[14] Departing New York City's harbor, the Petteys traveled to Ireland, and then on to Wales, England, and finally France before returning home again. Everywhere they journeyed, they were well received. Upon reaching Cork, Ireland, Sarah noticed of the faces in their hotel, "All were white, and yet we were royally entertained."[15] While Sarah hoped that her intellect and deportment might garner similar treatment at home, the reality was that racial differences trumped any shared values and commonalities along class lines in the minds of most white southerners. And yet Sarah's writings reveal that she and her husband strongly identified as Americans, despite the unequal treatment they faced in their native land.[16]

Sarah's European travel log alone set her apart from the typical African American in the South. She and Charles lived a separate existence from the

many black North Carolinians who continued to toil in the fields where their parents or, in some cases, they themselves, had been enslaved. The Petteys' worldliness was a sign of privilege, afforded to them by Charles's position within the Church, and their thirst to see the relics of the Old World bore the marks of higher education. Upon returning to New Bern, the Petteys openly exhibited signs of their relative privilege. Sarah could be seen riding through town in a carriage; Charles was known for sporting a silk top hat.[17] But showing one's status also had a utilitarian purpose: to prove to white southerners that African Americans were not inherently inferior. Given their degrees from institutions of higher learning and their professional training, the Petteys belonged to the black "better class," so called for their belief that they were setting the best example for the entire race. By living good Christian lives and practicing the Victorian values of sobriety and industriousness, the Petteys believed their achievements would insulate them against the indignities of Jim Crow.[18]

In the summer of 1896 the Church invited Sarah to begin writing a weekly "Woman's Column" for the *Star of Zion*. The invitation was likely issued due to her recent election as secretary of the Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society. But Sarah brought additional qualifications to the post. Her "thoughtful, fiery, flowery and clear-cut replies" to the *Star*'s editor, J. W. Smith, had marked her as "the best known of Zion's intellectual women."[19] Being added to the paper's roster of staff writers was no mean feat, given its national recognition as "one of the ablest church organs the Afro-American can claim."[20] Equally significant is the fact that Sarah was the first woman to be given a column in the publication.[21] Women within the AME Zion Church enjoyed a level of equality with male members relative to other black denominations. Even as Dudley Pettey argued for churchwomen to be eligible for more posts, she was quick to point out that AME Zion was leaps and bounds ahead of other churches. In 1880, for instance, the Church eliminated the word "male" from its "Book of Discipline," giving men and women equal rights as members. Similarly, at the Church's General Conferences held in the early 1890s, women were elected to the highest boards of leadership.[22] As a female leader within the Church, Dudley Pettey was still expected to be an able mother, a model wife, and an outstanding churchwoman, guiding men and women closer to God. By 1898 Sarah and Charles had seven children—five to whom Sarah had given birth and two from Charles's previous marriage.[23] Caring for such a large family must have left little time for professional pursuits, but Sarah churned out her weekly column without fail—a labor for which she was not paid. The Church's progressive stance on women's leadership apparently did not extend to wages for its women workers.[24]

If church leaders, most of whom were male, were at all reluctant to give women a public voice through the *Star*, they proved otherwise by placing few restrictions on Sarah's writing.[25] Knowing that Sarah's previous exchanges in the *Star* had been "fiery," Editor Smith was perhaps audacious in stating, "We do not chain her [Dudley Pettey] down to any particular topic. The world is her field."[26] Of course, he hoped that her provocative articles would draw a larger readership for the paper, especially women. And letters to the editor demonstrate that Dudley Pettey was responsible for attracting more female readers. In fact, when the *Star* failed to print her "spicy articles" for several weeks due to a lack of space, the editorial response to reader complaints was telling: "Such shall not occur again, for we have requested the Foreman to side-track anything that interferes."[27]

In her inaugural column, published in the late summer of 1896, Dudley Pettey made clear that she would not, as Editor Smith had predicted, stray from fiery issues. She pledged to dedicate her column to the "the elevation of oppressed humanity." Along these lines, Sarah introduced herself to readers by writing about the recent decisions handed down by the Supreme Court of the United States. Although she did not refer to a particular case, Dudley Pettey lamented "the numerous contradictory rebuttals by the high courts of America in discriminating unjustly on account of race, caste, color or previous condition of servitude." Earlier that spring, the court had issued its decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, upholding a Louisiana statute requiring separate railroad cars for blacks and whites. The majority opinion proclaimed that segregation did not constitute unlawful discrimination. In the wake of such a ruling, Sarah remarked that it was difficult to believe in the "brotherhood of man."[28] She made clear her objection to the court's injustice but urged moderation on the part of her readers: "Being constituents of this government, we can but be loyal to the American eagle, though he be unjust enough to draw racial lines by hovering beneath his mighty wings all of his white children; while with his talons he ruthlessly claws all who are poor and especially those who trace their lineage to ebony hued parentage."[29]

Dudley Pettey's decision to address government-sanctioned racial discrimination in her first column for the *Star* reflected her boldness and intellectual rigor. Her column also revealed how the *Star*, as the national publication of the AME Zion Church, had become the forum for discussions of politics and other issues important to the race. Still, there was a limit as to how "fiery" the editors would allow the *Star* to get. As respected leaders of the black middle class, they aimed to prevent the sparks of racial tension from escalating into all-out conflagration. Thus, the *Star*'s contributors generally stopped short of advocat-

ing radical actions on the part of their readership, even if they took liberties with their subject matter. Discussions of race relations should take place on the pages of the race's best newspapers, they believed, not in the streets. Likewise, Pettey urged her readers, as intelligent citizens, to remain loyal and to search for higher meaning in the rulings of the courts. Discrimination on account of class and color, Pettey suggested, might be mere "refining mills," designed to prepare those who are discriminated against for "higher citizenship."[30]

That Dudley Pettey expressed outrage over Jim Crow segregation in one breath and urged readers to remain hopeful in the next reflected the tumultuous time in which she was writing. As a college-educated black woman of status, she had been trained to lead fellow members of her race forward. But the court's actions placed a substantial obstacle in her path. In spite of the good work being done by black churches and community organizations, the highest court in the land had deemed African Americans worthy of no more than second-class citizenship. Dudley Pettey and other aspiring black leaders must have weighed the utility of political protest against that of "turning the other cheek" and placing faith in their efforts to prove themselves worthy. White supremacists were not only unlikely to compromise; they were likely to respond to "agitation" with further political repression and, in some cases, violence.

African American leaders were far from united on how to proceed. Just one year prior to the *Plessy* decision, Booker T. Washington had delivered his famous speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition held in Atlanta, in which he urged African Americans to "cast down their buckets" in the fields of the South. Industrial education, offered by Washington's own Tuskegee Institute, would provide the skills African Americans needed to uplift themselves to positions of intelligence and prosperity, so long as they steered clear of politics and demands for social equality. While white industrialists and philanthropists generally approved of Washington's message, even as they molded it to their own liking, many African Americans objected. They interpreted Washington's rhetoric as selling the race short. Surrendering political activism and choosing vocational training over a classical education did not sit well with people like Sarah and Charles Pettey. In fact, Charles delivered an address at the Atlanta Exposition in which he challenged African Americans to soar ever higher, to seek college education, and to look backward to slavery to see how far they had come.[31] To Sarah, the daughter of an officeholder, the idea of abandoning politics must have seemed counterintuitive. With black representatives in state and even national government as of 1896, the Petteys placed faith in their political allies. They could not have known that black participation in electoral politics would soon be just a memory.

The Petteys' residence in North Carolina offers some explanation for their optimism or apparent naivety. Although Mississippi and neighboring South Carolina had already disfranchised most black voters by 1896, North Carolina did not make this move until 1900.[32] Moreover, North Carolina had experienced a surge of black political participation during these years. As a result of the Fusionists' victory in the election of 1896, more than one hundred black men were elected or appointed to public positions in the Old North State. That same year, George H. White, the Petteys' neighbor from New Bern, won election to the U.S. House of Representatives; he was the last African American to represent the South in Congress until the 1970s.[33] Even the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy* might have seemed only temporary. As long as access to political power existed, laws limiting social equality—such as those that mandated segregated train cars—could be challenged and overturned. In spite of white supremacists' attempts elsewhere to curb black political activity, the Petteys thought it unlikely that black politics would be foreclosed to them completely.

They also thought the black "better class" could continue to lead the race to progress and prosperity. Educated and "respectable" African Americans exhibited temperance, piety, industriousness, and sexual propriety, hoping that such behavior would generate respect from whites. In short, they prayed that they would be judged by their character and not by the color of their skin. And sometimes this strategy met with success. Congressman White, for example, had no issues riding the rails from Washington, D.C., to the center of New Bern, where the city's "best citizens" met him with their carriages and buggies.[34] However, white racists increasingly refused to distinguish between African Americans who drove carriages and those who lacked any means of transportation. The black middle class, as upstanding citizens and living proof of the progress achieved only one generation removed from slavery, took it upon themselves to promote ideals of respectability among poor and working-class African Americans.[35] Amid the external threats of Jim Crow segregation and disfranchisement, these "better class" African Americans clung to something over which they had more control. Turning inward, black teachers, preachers, and writers like Sarah Dudley Pettey focused more intently on improving the race.[36]

As the AME Zion Church prepared to mark its centennial, Dudley Pettey saw an opportunity for African Americans to showcase their accomplishments in their celebrations. Commenting in her column after the fact, she said that the leading men and women of the Church had "astonished the world with their renditions." Sarah added that she hoped the celebrations "will stimulate Afro-Americans of every class to greater strides and possibilities."[37] The closing years of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a number of secular or-

ganizations dedicated to racial uplift, and chief among their organizers were black women. In 1896 the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was formed as a federation for African American clubwomen throughout the country. Mary Church Terrell, the organization's president, famously described its mission as "lifting as we climb." NACW members, who were characteristically middle class after climbing upward themselves, focused on the uplift of their downtrodden sisters.[38] Sarah Dudley Pettey praised the NACW for its support of "character-making institutions" and urged the organization to sponsor reformatory schools in every city so as "to help our erring boys and girls." Youth who had "fallen," she argued, reflected poorly on the race as a whole and provided an easy target for white southerners who wished to keep African Americans "in their place."[39]

Dudley Pettey was not afraid to rebut accusations of black degeneracy publicly. Using her column, she bit back at a "half-bred" Englishman who wrote that in his journey through the South, he had observed "lazy Negroes" and their "rough hewn log cabins in the cotton belt." In response, Sarah criticized the English author for not realizing the gradations among African Americans: "He seems not to know . . . that there are social barriers which prevent him from socially meeting our cultured and refined society."[40] These social gradations were abundantly clear in the activities of African American women's clubs that aimed to curb undesirable behaviors among the black "masses." Through temperance unions, home missionary societies, and mutual benefit associations, black middle-class women preached the values of sobriety, thrift, and respectability to poor African Americans. Middle-class reformers acted out of a sense of obligation and collective responsibility, but they also wanted to avoid being judged by the "errors" of the black poor. Sarah Dudley Pettey's call for the NACW to establish reformatory schools to steer "fallen youth" in the right direction was a case in point. While this strategy of uplift had very real benefits for African Americans, it was not without its costs, namely in the condescension directed toward "lower class" African Americans. As historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has argued, the idea of social uplift was paradoxical. Although those who preached uplift intended to subvert the dominant racial attitudes of white southerners by proving African Americans to be worthy of equal citizenship, they also judged a substantial number of African Americans to be "unfit" or detriments to the race as a whole. In so doing, reformers required their subjects to abide by the norms of the same dominant society that oppressed them.[41]

Uplift ideology also carried patriarchal connotations. In order to contradict the image constructed by whites of the dysfunctional black family, reformers projected images of African Americans who conformed to conventional gender

roles. The respectable black family, in their eyes, included two educated parents—a protective father and a protected mother whose marriage was a symbol of morality and stability.[42] At odds with this image of the patriarchal black family were women like Sarah Dudley Pettey who argued for the "new woman's" public role in politics and her equality with men. Indeed, she affirmed this very tension in her first column, explaining that her articles would venture beyond issues of the home and hearth to issues concerning church, state, and nation. She did not envision her column merely as a clearinghouse for recipes, fashion notes, and household tips. Instead, she believed that female readers were interested not only in their own sex but in "humanity at large."[43] In short, Sarah argued that black women should work toward constructing stable black homes and families as bulwarks against white supremacy, but such a focus should not preclude women's full participation in the public sphere.

As an exemplar of "new womanhood" herself, Sarah Dudley Pettey used her column to illustrate that she and her female contemporaries were highly educated and knowledgeable about current events. With great moral suasion, she called for an end to the Spanish-American War, citing the horrendous human suffering that had already occurred in Cuba.[44] The "up-to-date woman" was knowledgeable about politics on the home front, too: "Should circumstance warrant it, she is qualified to legislate and arbitrate with statesmen of no mean ability." She went on to argue that women served an important purpose in electoral campaigns: "In this spurious era of irregular party lines and populistic gore with fusion as the unknown quantity, woman is a silent but potent factor in molding sentiment for the approaching campaign."[45] Women could be the critical influence on their husbands, brothers, and sons; thus, their potential to sway the results should not be ignored. Another writer for the *Star* recognized "the tremendous possibilities of the new woman" in the upcoming 1896 presidential election. The author described women, who as "rooters" had become important features of the national party conventions, waving their handkerchiefs in support from the galleries.[46]

But Sarah Dudley Pettey thought women should do much more than wave handkerchiefs. Women were qualified to vote, she claimed, and she mentioned that some states already allowed women the right of suffrage. Furthermore, she explained, women were in positions of power all over the world: "The Czarina has been made a colonel in the army. . . . There are six other female colonels in Europe."[47] Dudley Pettey believed it was time for women to be regarded as the equals of men. No longer should they sit on the sidelines, lest they "succumb to man's supremacy." Rather, the "up-to-date" woman ought to be engaged in all things; she must take her place "in the front rank of the thinkers of the age."[48]

She recognized that her advocacy for women's equality had its opponents. Some might call the new woman "masculine," or laugh at her, she acknowledged. In response, Dudley Pettey connected the oppression of women to the oppression of African Americans. Insisting that women should be constrained to the domestic sphere, Sarah said, was akin to arguing that African Americans should only be educated for "menial labor." She was speaking directly to her audience of black churchmen, many of whom had been highly educated in denominational schools. Connected in their status as oppressed classes of humanity, women and African Americans, she argued, deserved support in their efforts to overcome the dominant classes' labels of inferiority.[49]

Sarah Dudley Pettey saw women's equality as an independent good in and of itself, but she also saw women's advancement as crucial to the uplift of the entire race. Tactically, women as the equals of men would cast ballots, participate in politicking at every level, and contribute to outmaneuvering white supremacists who sought to keep African Americans down. Dudley Pettey's vociferous calls for women's equality in the *Star of Zion* were matched by her outrage against racism. Referring to "colorphobia" as a contagion, Dudley Pettey lamented the United States' infection: "This republic of ours has suffered so from this direful and much dreaded malady until nausea has been brought on wherever the face of an Afro-American is seen."[50] But Dudley Pettey didn't just lament attacks on the race from the outside. In her column, which targeted an internal audience, she urged members of her race to do better in combatting white supremacy. For one, African Americans should reject the term "colored," she argued. The term "Afro-American" was far more preferable, she said.[51] Dudley Pettey cared as much about improving members of her own race as she did about confronting the growing threat of Jim Crow. In her mind, the two were connected.

As the possibility of disfranchisement grew and the status of even the most respectable African Americans was threatened, Sarah Dudley Pettey must have been perplexed as to how to proceed. A part of her did not believe that white supremacists would succeed, but events in neighboring states throughout the South offered evidence to the contrary. Sarah worked out her response the best way she knew how—with her pen. In her column in the *Star*, Dudley Pettey alerted readers to news that the Atlanta Traction Railroad Company had begun to enforce Jim Crow segregation on its railcars. She noted with approval the actions of the city's black women, who had voiced their discontent by meeting en masse and passing resolutions denouncing the company's discriminatory policy. When Dudley Pettey had lamented news of the *Plessy* decision just months earlier, she maintained that African Americans could find hope in their own accomplishments and institutions. Now that private companies, with the sanc-

tion of state legislatures, were enforcing unjust statutes, Dudley Pettey questioned her previous optimism. Atlanta's women had the right idea, she decided. Praising the women protesters as "patriotic" and "liberty-loving," she stated her support for their "bold and courageous stand in defense of an ill-fated race."[52]

It is curious that Dudley Pettey applauded the actions of women in Atlanta, for many members of the black "better class" might have turned down their noses at such direct action. But Dudley Pettey's pledge of solidarity with the women illustrates that some members of the black leadership class were growing tired of current measures used to resist white supremacy. Increasingly, railroad companies were discriminating on the basis of skin color alone, requiring all African Americans to ride in the Jim Crow car, whereas previously they had shown favor toward those of the "better class."[53] The black middle class, unable to use their social status and respectability as leverage against discriminatory legislation, searched for alternative means of resistance. Taking their claims to court represented one option, although recent legal decisions proved that justice was, in fact, not color-blind. Breaking with a pattern, Sarah suggested that middle-class black women take a lesson from their working-class sisters. "We earnestly hope that the better class of Afro-Americans in Atlanta will make sacrifices and walk to and from their places of business wherever and whenever they can," she said. No longer was social propriety an issue, in her mind, for the railroad company had hurled the first indignities at African Americans through its enforcement of segregation. Boycotting the railways with power in numbers, she told her readers, was the only way to show the company it could not afford to discriminate on the basis of race or color.[54]

The Petteys' class status and the very fact that they were able to move about the country with relative ease certainly insulated them from the worst manifestations of Jim Crow. For most of 1897 Sarah and Charles traveled throughout the North on church business. Sarah's travel notes, which she published in her column, reflected the relative comfort with which the AME Zion party journeyed through New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The Petteys and their colleagues rode around the Garden State by trolley car and perused summer cottages along the Jersey Shore. During their stay in Philadelphia, the group was honored with several grand receptions, elaborate dinners, and high teas.[55] Sarah's commentary revealed the extent to which the Petteys were simply out of touch with the everyday indignities suffered by black laborers who had to use segregated transportation to travel to and from work. Dudley Pettey further illustrated her naivety with regard to the black working class when she expressed delight over the presence of black laborers in the Carnegie mills of Pennsylvania.[56] When faced with picketing white workers, mill managers had

brought in black workers from the South as strikebreakers. To Sarah, the employment of African Americans in any industry represented progress for the race, irrespective of the low wages and dirty work to which black laborers were subjected. Her faith in the "better class" of African Americans to uplift the race shielded her from the mounting white supremacy campaign that would strike her home state in the coming years and target all African Americans, regardless of class or status.

In the meantime, Sarah Dudley Pettey focused her columns on an issue that affected her more directly—the status of women within the AME Zion denomination. Though women like herself enjoyed official positions within the church hierarchy, few church leaders were sold on the issue of equality between churchmen and churchwomen. Although Sarah's own accomplishments were undeniable, countless members attributed her many appointments solely to her marriage. Being the "Bishop's wife" had its perks, and Dudley Pettey used them to her advantage. At the Church's Ohio-Allegheny Conference in 1897 she had the privilege of delivering an address. Her talk, "Woman, the Equal of Man," no doubt, ruffled a few feathers.[57] Perhaps it was Sarah's boldness on such occasions that provoked an anonymous editorial in the *Star* some weeks later: "A wife can make or unmake her husband in the church. If she is determined to act the fool and damage the influence of the one that is making her bread and butter she ought to act behind closed doors and not before the public."[58] Yet Dudley Pettey did not heed such warnings. She continued to write about the "prominent women of Zion" in her column, where she declared that "a century from now . . . women shall have entered every door of usefulness now ajar to the sterner sex only."[59] As she celebrated women all over the world who had achieved greatness, she asked, "What position is there that a woman cannot fill?"[60]

In the summer of 1898 Sarah continued to pose this rhetorical question of the AME Zion Church when Mary J. Small, a fellow executive member of the Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society, was elected an elder in the Philadelphia and Baltimore Conference. Bishop Charles Pettey performed her ordination. Little time had passed before an announcement in the *Star* declared, "Mrs. Small has the same rights now as the ministers. The way is open now for her to pastor a church and be a presiding elder and bishop."[61] In the next iteration of her "Woman's Column," Dudley Pettey made clear that the denomination had already paved the way for Small, lest those who opposed her ordination forget that the AME Zion Church had been most progressive in granting equal rights and opportunities to women. Small, of course, had demonstrated full qualifications for the job. After serving four years as a deacon, she had passed the neces-

sary examinations required to attain the position of elder.[62] But a female elder, let alone the possibility of a female bishop, was too much for some churchmen. A stern protest by the Reverend S. A. Chambers, a preacher from Rock Hill, South Carolina, appeared on the front page of the *Star*, proclaiming, "The 'New Woman' is becoming most too new." Arguing that the ordination of women had no basis in biblical text, he urged the next General Conference to "toll the death knell of the petticoat ministry."[63] Sarah was not alone in her defense of Mary Small, nor was the Reverend Chambers alone in his opposition. Numerous church members crowded the pages of the *Star* with debates on the role of women in the Church through the end of the year. Regardless of how much Dudley Pettey and her cohort of female leaders worked toward racial equality on behalf of all church members, gendered tensions remained within their own institution.

For Sarah Dudley Pettey, questions of women's status within the Church were of the utmost concern in the autumn of 1898,[64] so much so that the impending election in North Carolina, in which race appeared to be the single issue, did not make it into her commentary in the *Star*. In the Petteys' home state, the Democratic Party, headed by future U.S. senator Furnifold M. Simmons, led a racially charged campaign to reverse the Populist-Republican Fusion victory of 1896. With Josephus Daniels, editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, as their spokesperson, the Democrats used scare tactics of "Negro domination" to regain power, and they viewed the disfranchisement of black voters as their primary goal.[65] As race relations approached the boiling point in the Old North State, Dudley Pettey's columns appeared less frequently than they had in years past. She was likely busy tending to her fifth child, to whom she had given birth earlier that year.[66] But other contributors to the *Star* kept relatively mum on the heated campaign as well. Members of the black middle class, who constituted the majority of the paper's readers, were at a loss for words to describe the threats of white Democrats. One editorial in late October did broach the subject. Author J. W. Smith presented the prospects of a Democratic victory as unlikely, venturing so far as to label the party's strategy a "scare-crow" tactic and a "false alarm." He pointed out the impossibility of "Negro rule," given that the state's white population outnumbered the black population three to one. Still, Smith urged African Americans to cast their lot with the Republican Party, stand united, and "go quietly to the polls and vote against every man that coughs up the race issue."[67] No one could have known that white supremacists would be so successful at keeping black voters from casting their ballots in the first place and passing a state constitutional amendment to keep them from coming back.

The campaign came to a head in Wilmington, where Democratic leaders encouraged white men to "protect their firesides and loved ones" by taking the life of any black man who tried to vote on Election Day. White supremacist tactics manifested in violence as "Red Shirts" rode through African American neighborhoods with weapons to scare black voters away from the polls. As a result of intimidation and fraud, Democrats regained political power in North Carolina. But the violence continued. Two days after the election, a full-fledged race riot erupted in the streets of Wilmington and left more than ten African Americans dead.[68] The newly elected Democrats entered office in 1899 and went straight to work to reverse the Fusionist victories of the previous legislature—among them, increased funding for public education. Both Houses of the General Assembly passed a Jim Crow railroad bill that required separate cars according to race and regardless of class. The Democrats also followed through on their chief campaign promise: to disfranchise African Americans and restore white supremacy by passing an amendment to the state constitution.[69] Only three African Americans were left in the state legislature to vote against this proposal. To add insult to injury, North Carolina's Republican Party expelled African Americans from its ranks, thus removing black men's chosen forum for political organization. In an August special election held to vote on the amendment, racial intimidation and fraud prevailed once again at the ballot boxes.[70]

The victories attained through white supremacy caused many members of the black middle class to question their future in North Carolina. White Democrats had shown no regard for status among African Americans. In fact, they had targeted black politicians and leaders who sought to enact change through various political channels. Historian Glenda Gilmore estimates that almost twenty-eight thousand African Americans, most of them men, left North Carolina between 1900 and 1910.[71] In general, those who remained in North Carolina shifted their energy from politics to religious work, economic development, and community improvement. Of course, the black middle class had already laid the infrastructure for these uplift activities during the previous decades.

Even among the upper tiers of black society, the response to a world devoid of electoral politics was mixed. Educator Booker T. Washington, who had earned the support of northern white philanthropists for his advocacy of industrial education and of southern white politicians for his rejection of politics, urged African Americans to remain in the South and focus on working hard and "casting down their buckets." James E. Shepard, a former devotee of the North Carolina Republican Party, adopted Washington's language and began raising money for a National Religious Training School in Durham. Despite his own affinity for a classical curriculum, Shepard marketed his school as a center for

industrial education in an effort to court white philanthropists.[72] While Shepard illustrates the ease with which some black leaders managed to recast themselves as advocates of vocational training and disinterested in the political sphere, the task of leaving behind the tenets of a former life proved more difficult for others.

The idea of jettisoning politics and devaluing higher education in the same breath must have seemed impossible to the Petteys. After all, Charles and Sarah had been a part of freedom's first generation to be educated in the South's African American denominational colleges. Sarah was loath to remain in a state where educational options for African Americans assumed their racial inferiority and worse, inherent limitations for women. She objected to placing a ceiling on young black women's aspirations. Domestic work may have been appropriate for some, but the "best" African Americans required outlets like literary societies and political parties in order to achieve their full potential.[73]

As a black woman, Sarah could have joined her sisters in the black middle class who turned inward and led the race forward by founding progressive organizations. Indeed, she had helped to pioneer the early missionary societies and temperance organizations, which took on new meanings in a post-disfranchisement world. But not all women who headed these organizations with great zeal in the early twentieth century shared Sarah's attachment to electoral politics and to woman's suffrage. Finding an outlet for her opinions in this new environment was difficult. Although Sarah maintained authorship of the "Woman's Column" in the *Star of Zion* until 1904, she contributed only sporadically. The very nature of the Church's publication had shifted in response to changing racial and political climes. Whereas Editor J. W. Smith had previously embraced the "fiery" editorials and "spicy" columns that Dudley Pettey was used to writing, he now felt the need to rein in the "hot-headed speakers and writers whose indiscreet, hysterical babblings only excite the passions of the two races."[74] It is not certain whether Dudley Pettey was urged to temper her opinions or simply wrote less often because of personal circumstances. Either way, the *Star* was not the home it once was for authors like Dudley Pettey to speak their minds on matters of racial or gender equality.

In the midst of the Democrats' takeover of North Carolina's legislative and executive offices, Charles Pettey suffered a debilitating illness and passed away, leaving behind his wife and seven children to navigate the tumultuous tides of white supremacy alone.[75] Charged with the task of burying her husband and finding a way to make ends meet, Sarah was understandably absent from her post in the Church. For all of her service to AME Zion, one would have thought the Church would provide financial assistance to Sarah and her children during their time of need. But church financial officers dragged their feet at repaying a few thousand dollars they owed the Pettey family, and Sarah continued in her

unpaid position on the Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society Board. Fittingly, she traveled northward for some time to seek refuge with her friend and ordained elder Mary Small, who had faced heavy scrutiny for challenging the Church's gender hierarchy.[76] In 1906 Sarah became gravely ill herself and died just a few weeks later, at the age of thirty-seven.[77]

We cannot know how Sarah would have adapted to life in the post-disfranchisement South or if she would have sought permanent exile in the North. No doubt she would have looked favorably on the women of the black "better class" who refashioned their activities in churches, temperance societies, and community organizations to serve as surrogates for electoral politics. In the public sphere, but disguised by their seemingly private activities, they lived out Dudley Pettey's vision of the "new woman." Like Dudley Pettey, they worked toward the twin goals of uplifting the race and ensuring equal opportunities for women.[78]

Long after her death, Sarah Dudley Pettey's writings remind us what we have forgotten about a period known as the "nadir" in African American history. For many black North Carolinians in particular, the closing decades of the nineteenth century were characterized by moments of optimism. African Americans in the Old North State enjoyed unprecedented opportunities in higher education, made possible by their own uplift efforts, which were supported by the black church, northern philanthropists, and state politicians in the Fusionist coalition. By demonstrating their progress as a race, black leaders like the Petteys held out hope that they could ward off Jim Crow. Furthermore, they believed that black men's right to suffrage would remain intact. Sarah Dudley Pettey even hoped the right to vote would be extended to women. From the pages of the *Star of Zion*, Dudley Pettey was able to advocate for her related goals of racial uplift and gender equality despite the tightening grip of white supremacy. Her fiery editorials serve as a written record of the dynamic leadership of black women in politics throughout this period of North Carolina history.

NOTES

Many thanks to the editors for their comments and to Jessica Wilkerson for reading an early draft of this essay.

1. Sarah Dudley Pettey, "The Up-to-Date Woman," *Star of Zion*, August 13, 1896.

2. Two sources list Sarah Dudley's birthdate as November 9, 1868: Monroe Alphus Majors, *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1893), 59; and James Walker Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African Methodism* (New York: AME Zion Book Concern, 1895), 538. In her monograph, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–*

1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Glenda Gilmore lists November 9, 1869, as Sarah's birthdate. This date is based on Gilmore's genealogical research and her conversations with descendants of the Dudley family. See Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 235.

3. Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 58; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 7.

4. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 10; D. W. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature; or, a Cyclopedia of Thought on the Vital Topics Relating to the American Negro* (Naperville, Ill.: J. L. Nichols, 1902), 182; Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 59; Hood, *One Hundred Years*, 538.

5. Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 59; Hood, *One Hundred Years*, 539; Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 182; James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 74; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 26–27; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 10–11.

6. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 11.

7. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 182; Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 59; Hood, *One Hundred Years*, 539.

8. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 11.

9. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 182.

10. Ibid.

11. Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 59. On the demand for black teachers in black schools, see Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 92–96.

12. Sarah E. C. Pettey, "A Sketch of Bishop Pettey's Life," in Hood, *One Hundred Years*, 195–200; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 11–12.

13. Pettey, "Sketch of Bishop Pettey's Life," 200.

14. A biographical sketch of Sarah Dudley Pettey appears along with an excerpt from her travel journal in Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 57–64.

15. Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 61.

16. Ibid.

17. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 12–13.

18. Janette Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White Better Classes in Charlotte, 1850–1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 2–5; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, xix.

19. J. W. Smith, *Star of Zion*, July 23, 1896.

20. Irvine Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, Mass.: Wiley, 1901), 197.

21. Editorial, *Star of Zion*, August 6, 1896.

22. Dudley Pettey, "Zion and Her Women," *Star of Zion*, August 20, 1896; Dudley Pettey, "Our Centennial," *Star of Zion*, August 27, 1896; Dudley Pettey, "A Peep over the Screen at Zion," *Star of Zion*, October 22, 1896.

23. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 127.

24. Sarah Dudley Pettey's position on the Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society Board as well as her writing of the "Woman's Column" were unpaid. See Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 133–34.

25. Smith, *Star of Zion*, July 23, 1896.

26. Ibid.

27. Editorial, *Star of Zion*, December 10, 1896.

28. Dudley Pettey, "Salutatory," *Star of Zion*, August 6, 1896.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address," in *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1901), 217–25; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 25–26.

32. Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina, 1872–1901: The Black Second* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 227.

33. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 78. On the implications of the 1896 election for black political participation, see Helen Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894–1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); and Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*.

34. Dudley Pettey, "An Oration to Hon. Geo. H. White," *Star of Zion*, December 10, 1896.

35. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14–15.

36. Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 9.

37. Dudley Pettey, "Wedding Bells and Literary Societies," *Star of Zion*, November 5, 1896.

38. Mary Church Terrell, "The Duty of the National Association of Colored Women," in Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 206–7.

39. Dudley Pettey, "Things Talked About," *Star of Zion*, September 10, 1896.

40. Dudley Pettey, "Reflections," *Star of Zion*, October 8, 1896.

41. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 18. On the paradoxical nature of racial uplift ideology, see also Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

42. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 78–80.

43. Dudley Pettey, "The Up-to-Date Woman," *Star of Zion*, August 13, 1896.

44. Dudley Pettey, "Things Talked About," *Star of Zion*, September 10, 1896; Dudley Pettey, "What Some People are Doing," *Star of Zion*, October 15, 1896.

45. Dudley Pettey, "The Up-to-Date Woman," *Star of Zion*, August 13, 1896.

46. "Women Campaigners," *Star of Zion*, November 5, 1896.

47. Dudley Pettey, "Current News," *Star of Zion*, September 17, 1896.

48. Dudley Pettey, "The Up-to-Date Woman," *Star of Zion*, August 13, 1896.

49. Ibid.

50. Dudley Pettey, "Current News," *Star of Zion*, September 17, 1896.

51. Dudley Pettey, "Things Talked About," *Star of Zion*, September 10, 1896.

52. Dudley Pettey, "Reflections," *Star of Zion*, October 8, 1896.

53. On instances of members of the black middle class suffering indignities on southern railways, see, for example, "Infamy on Wheels," and "Called the Bishop a Negro," *The Christian Recorder*, January 16, 1896, and March 11, 1897.

54. Dudley Pettey, "Reflections," *Star of Zion*, October 8, 1896.

55. Dudley Pettey, "Incidents by the Way," *Star of Zion*, June 3, 1897.

56. Dudley Pettey, "Incidents by the Way," *Star of Zion*, July 1, 1897.

57. Dudley Pettey, "Allegheny-Ohio Conferences," *Star of Zion*, July 22, 1897.

58. Editorial, *Star of Zion*, August 5, 1897.

59. Dudley Pettey, "Prominent Women in Zion," *Star of Zion*, October 21, 1897.

60. Dudley Pettey, "Signs of the Times," *Star of Zion*, October 28, 1897.

61. "A Female Elder," *Star of Zion*, June 2, 1898.

62. Dudley Pettey, "Some Prominent Elders in Zion," *Star of Zion*, June 23, 1898.

63. Reverend S. A. Chambers, "A Few Cannon Balls," *Star of Zion*, June 16, 1898; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 19.

64. In addition to her column written in support of Small, Dudley Pettey penned a three-issue tribute to Eliza Day, the mother of esteemed race leader and AME Zion member Dr. William Howard Day. See Dudley Pettey, "Dr. Day's Mother: She Was The Embodiment of Great and Noble Qualities," *Star of Zion*, August 4, 11, and 18, 1898.

65. On the 1898 election in North Carolina, see Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy*, 186–213.

66. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 94.

67. "A Race Issue Campaign," *Star of Zion*, October 27, 1898; Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy*, 193–95.

68. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 105, 109, 111–14; Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy*, 196–97. On the Democratic white supremacy campaign of 1898, see also Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*. On the Wilmington Race Riot, see Timothy B. Tyson and David S. Cecelski, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

69. Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy*, 205; John H. Haley, *Charles N. Hunter and Race Relations in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 120. For the text of the proposed constitutional amendment, see The People's Party, "Proposed Suffrage Amendment of 1899," Electronic edition transcribed by Matthew Kern, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/populist/populist.html (accessed December 1, 2011).

70. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 119, 125; Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*, 304–7.

71. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 131.

72. James Shepard, *Raleigh Morning Post*, January 2, 1900, quoted in Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 139. Shepard himself was a graduate of Shaw University, and over the course of his school presidency, he would add liberal arts courses whenever possible, sometimes to the school's financial detriment. He eventually realized his goal when the National Religious Training School became North Carolina's first four-year college for African Americans. See Sarah Caroline Thuesen, "Classes of Citizenship: The Culture and Politics of Black Education in North Carolina, 1919–1960" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2003).

73. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 141.

74. "What Must Be Done," *Star of Zion*, January 5, 1899; Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy*, 202; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 133.

75. See various articles in the *Star of Zion*, December 1900 through January 1901; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 126–29.

76. On Dudley Pettey's stay with Mary Small, see Dudley Pettey, "The Proceedings of the Woman's H. and F. Missionary Covention," *Star of Zion*, August 29, 1901; Dudley Pettey, "A Visit to York," *Star of Zion*, September 26, 1901; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 133–34.

77. Sarah Dudley Pettey's obituary, written by John Dancy, appears in the *AME Zion Quarterly Review* 6 (1907): 75–76. See also Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 133–34.

78. On black women's activities post-disfranchisement, see chaps. 6 ("Diplomatic Women") and 7 ("Forging Interracial Links") in Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 147–202.

Mary Martin Sloop

Mountain Miracle Worker

JOHN C. INSCOE

The frontispiece of Mary Martin Sloop's 1953 memoir, *Miracle in the Hills*, consists of a remarkable photograph made in the late 1910s. It depicts two doctors, in surgical garb, standing over a patient laid out on a crude kitchen table in a cramped, low-ceilinged mountain cabin with concerned family members (one assumes) gathered around. The two doctors are husband and wife, Eustace and Mary Sloop. Another photograph that appears elsewhere in the book re-creates that scene in an outdoor setting, under what Mrs. Sloop called their "antiseptic apple tree," which for many years, she said, was the safest place to operate.[1] Those images capture both the purpose and the challenges faced by this couple and the medical mission they undertook in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, a mission that transformed a single community in dramatic ways over the half century in which the Sloops lived and worked in its midst.

It was over a decade earlier, in 1908, that the doctors Sloop settled first in Plumtree, then three years later moved to Crossnore, both in Avery County. Determined to provide health care to a remote and impoverished populace, the Sloops spent the rest of their lives there, over five decades for Mary (she died in 1962 at age ninety), and almost as long for Eustace (he died in 1961 at age eighty-three). "We had little money, but we did have our medical degrees, and we figured we were both pretty good doctors; we had our health, we were both tough as pine nuts, and we could take a lot of licks," she explained to a reporter in 1951. "We could return them, too, in terms of healthy swings at disease and poor diet habits, poverty through lack of opportunity, illiteracy, superstition, and all the other ills" that they found so rampant among these Carolina highlanders.[2]

For the first few years, the couple was on the move, providing medical attention and often surgery to highlanders whose lives differed little from those of their pioneer ancestors. Mary noted that "we too were pioneers" and that

DRS. EUSTACE AND MARY L. MARTIN SLOOP PERFORMING SURGERY UNDER THEIR "ANTISEPTIC" APPLE TREE, CROSSNORE, N.C., C. 1920S

Photo from Mary L. Martin Sloop's autobiography *Miracle in the Hills* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 68.

"sometimes the job of making a simple living was almost beyond accomplishment." In describing those early years, she wrote that "it was tough riding horseback far into the lonely hills to visit some sick man or woman or little child, someone sawed half in two in a dreadful sawmill accident or shot in a brawl over the division of a run of moonshine liquor, or ill of typhoid fever or suffering terribly from a strangulated hernia. It was hard work and cold, and often we came home from it worn out and discouraged."[3]

The realization that the Sloops were making a difference in the lives of those they chose to serve meant far more than the financial gain they might have made as physicians elsewhere. As pioneers, Sloop stated, "we were often forced to improvise," which often included operating tables. They would often set up under large shade trees tables borrowed from the patient's kitchen or constructed on the spot from boards laid across two saw horses, as captured in those remarkable photographs. They improvised instruments as well. In one of many eloquent passages in which she extolled her husband's skill, dedication, and resourcefulness, Sloop wrote:

> I remember many a time how I pictured in my mind's eye, as I helped him with an operation, Doctor bending over a patient in some great hospital's white operating room, in Boston or Philadelphia or New York as he performed with skillful hands a delicate operation that saved the life of his patient.
>
> Nor was there anything wrong with that picture, except that the white operating room was the great outdoors, and the assisting surgeons and nurses were a handful of the patient's anxious relatives and friends and country-doctor wife. For Doctor was the same in both pictures. His operations did save many lives, and I happily join countless ones in the mountains who call him great and bless him for what he has done and for the manner of his doing so.

While constantly extolling his successes, Mary shared the credit with his patients as well. "But then we were operating upon a very sturdy kind of people," she added, "a people most of whom had led a clean life and had had practically no tuberculosis and no typhoid fever."[4]

Sloop noted that another benefit of their success rate was that it won these highlanders over to the value of surgery. She singled out one of their first surgeries, in which an old man brought his son, a young blacksmith, writhing in pain, to their cottage. She diagnosed his problem as a ruptured appendix and quickly improvised in gathering equipment, sterilizing it and the room around it, and setting up a makeshift operating table with enough lighting by kerosene lamps so that Doctor could begin the operation as soon as he arrived home. After a long night in surgery, the Sloops finally retired, not at all sure that the young

man would survive. When Mary came back downstairs at daybreak to check on him, she found a crowd gathering outside the house, "big, strong men, some of them rough-looking, all of them interested in what was going to happen, and many of them opposed to our operating." Several were trying vehemently to convince the patient's elderly father that he was a fool to "let these young doctors practice on his son," convinced themselves that he would never wake up. "It frightened me a bit," Sloop later recalled, "to see them come with shotguns and rifles," though she later learned that such accessories were routine.[5]

The slow but steady recuperation of the blacksmith proved a turning point for the community and established its trust in both the Sloops and the value of surgery. Soon, Mary wrote, "operations became pretty numerous, and I used to laugh and tell Doctor that he was depriving the human body of everything it could spare and some things I thought it couldn't." At the same time, "they no longer suspected that we had settled here just to practice on them and then go somewhere else; they were satisfied that we had come to stay and that our entire purpose and hope was to help them." As a result, "confidence grew, and friendships developed and matured."[6] Or as she expressed it on another occasion, "Gradually the healing art won its way. Even the most ungracious could not hold out long against the doctors who set their broken bones, and saved their babies from strangling to death with diphtheria."[7]

For all of her adulation of Eustace and his medical success in the face of such primitive conditions, Mary was far more than his mere surgical assistant. While ever deferential to her husband's superior abilities and dedication (she always referred to him as Doctor, and expected people to call her Mrs. Sloop), she soon emerged as an equally dedicated overachiever, and by the 1920s she had become an even more prominent figure than he was in the history of Appalachian mission work—as an educator. If it was the woeful lack of medical services or facilities that drew the Sloops to Crossnore and led them to stay there, Mary soon realized that the lack of educational opportunity was equally problematic for mountain people. She eventually gave up practicing medicine with her husband in order to devote herself to what ultimately became one of the most enduring and widely publicized success stories from southern Appalachia's age of discovery and uplift—the Crossnore School, established in 1913.

The terms "magical" and "miraculous" were frequently applied to Mrs. Sloop and her achievements. An article in the *American Magazine* in 1926, for example, was titled "The Magician's Trunk," in reference to the boxes of old clothes that she gathered and sold to raise funds for the school.[8] *Girls Who Made Good*, a children's book published in 1930, devoted a chapter to Sloop along with the likes of Marie Curie, Florence Nightingale, and Jane Addams.[9] A feature article

on Crossnore in the *Charlotte Observer* in 1934 touted the headline "A Miracle Melting Pot Yields New Hopes and Possibilities."[10] In 1948 a *Saturday Evening Post* writer, equally enamored of Sloop and her accomplishments, summed up what she had done at Crossnore. He declared that, at seventy-six years of age, she "has accomplished what thousands of friends consider as much as miracle as anything that could happen in this miracle-doubting age," and went on to say:

> In this region that furnished most of the King's Mountain sharpshooters, Dr. Sloop . . . today is known as the greatest fighter in the Carolina Highlands, although this attribute is lovingly bestowed. Single-handed she has intimidated bootleggers, defied political opposition, forced local law officers to discharge their duties, and shamed mountain farmers into taking their children out of corn fields and potato patches and sending them to school. Workmen around Crossnore know her as a beloved old bickerer who can make a dollar bill stretch until George Washington's wig looks like a paper napkin. . . . Mary Sloop is considered by thousands of friends the first citizen of North Carolina.[11]

Perhaps it is no wonder that Sloop, at eighty years of age, titled her own memoir *Miracle in the Hills* when it was published some five years later.

Curiously, though, Mary Sloop's story has attracted little scholarly attention since her death. Even as historians in recent years have turned increasingly to the reformers, educators, and missionaries who sought out and fought against the poverty, ignorance, and social ills in the mountain South, Sloop's name is rarely mentioned.[12] She never seems to have acknowledged, if indeed she recognized, that their mission in Avery County was part of that broader movement of those who moved into Appalachia to establish schools, medical services, and other forms of uplift and progressive reform. And yet her story cannot be fully understood or appreciated except as part of Appalachia's "age of discovery" and the centrality of women at every phase of its implementation.

By the turn of the twentieth century, most southern highlanders still relied on a traditional system of folk medicine—often practiced by lay midwives and "grannies," along with a few "country doctors" who only occasionally found their way into the more remote areas of the region.[13] Those years saw a significant increase in fully trained physicians into Central Appalachia, in part to serve the burgeoning coal-mining communities forming there. Women followed over the next few decades with a variety of organized efforts, most notably the Frontier Nursing Service, founded by Kentucky matriarch Mary Breckinridge in 1925, and women's clubs that mobilized to fund these projects. They often took the lead in efforts to replace this primitive folk medicine practice with modern, scientific, and professional health care for mountain residents.[14] The only other

female physician besides Mary Sloop to practice in the region was May Cravath Wharton, a Minnesota native, who moved with her husband, a Congregational minister, into the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee in 1917. She served as a community doctor in Pleasant Hill, establishing a sanatorium there and multiple clinics throughout the region, and by coincidence, published a memoir of her experiences, *Doctor Woman of the Cumberlands*, in 1953, the same year as Sloop's memoir appeared.[15]

Educational missions were even more prevalent during the same era, with women often at the helm of a wide variety of efforts to provide schooling for highland children. Eastern Kentucky has attracted the lion's share of scholarship on the topic. In 1882 Presbyterian minister and physician Edward O. Guerrant established the first of seventeen boarding and day schools for Kentucky highlanders and recruited dozens of young women as teachers between then and his death in 1916. The settlement school movement followed with the Hindman (1902) and Pine Mountain (1913) Schools, founded and operated by forceful and highly motivated women, including Kathleen Petit, May Stone, and Ethel DeLong Zande. "Moonlight schools" were established by another Kentuckian, Cora Wilson Stewart, in the early 1910s to fight illiteracy among adult mountain residents through courses offered at night.[16]

Much of this burgeoning mission to educate mountain whites was driven by denominational organizations, with Presbyterians at the forefront, establishing no fewer than sixty-five schools in Appalachia between 1885 and 1915. These included a number of schools and two orphanages in western North Carolina, some of which evolved into still-existent colleges, including Lees-McRae, Warren Wilson, Asheville Biltmore, and Montreat-Anderson. Methodists and Baptists also joined the surge with significant efforts throughout the region, including Mars Hill and Brevard Colleges. The folk school movement followed—most notably, the Penland School in 1923 and the John C. Campbell Folk School, founded by his widow Olive Dame Campbell in 1925, both in remote highland North Carolina, and the Highlander Folk School, established in 1932 in Monteagle, Tennessee.[17] Eustace and Mary Sloop were part of and precursors to these developments, both medical and educational, and yet they operated independently of their many colleagues in the field and of any institutional or denominational sponsorship despite their strong Presbyterian roots. Mary emphatically made the point in various interviews that she and her husband "have been strictly on our own," living almost entirely on what he earned from his medical practice. "We are not—and never have been the representatives of any organization," she insisted.[18]

It was at a small but already distinguished Presbyterian college that Mary

Sloop's values and sense of mission were shaped and on that same campus where the Sloops met and prepared themselves for the lifelong mission they would undertake together. In 1870 Mary's father, William J. Martin, joined the faculty of Davidson College, where he taught both geology and chemistry. A native Virginian, Martin had begun his teaching career at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania. When University of North Carolina professor Elisha Mitchell suffered a fatal fall in 1857 on the Black Mountain peak that would later bear his name, Martin was called to take his place, and it was from there that he spent the Civil War years as the captain of a Confederate company of Chapel Hill enlistees. He returned to the state university after the war and continued to teach there until he was recruited to Davidson College five years later.[19]

Mary was born in the town of Davidson in 1873 and grew up on the all-male college campus as part of a large family of ten children.[20] She later claimed that the impulse to serve as a missionary struck early, when at the age of seven, she gathered local black children on her back porch and taught them the Bible stories she had learned in Sunday school that morning.[21] That experience, along with an extended visit to the college by a Presbyterian missionary couple who were friends of her father and told of their recent service in Siam, made strong impressions on the young girl. Their missionary guests noted that many Siamese died from the lack of adequate medical service, which Sloop later declared made her decide that she would become a medical missionary. She set her sights on Africa because, she explained, she had found her work with local black children so rewarding. In 1890 she enrolled at the Statesville Female College for Women (reluctantly, it seems: she not only resented the redundancy in its name, but declared that she found "female" to be "one of the most horrible words in the English language").[22]

Graduating at age eighteen, Mary moved from an all-female to an all-male academic world by becoming the only coed at Davidson, where she continued her studies while taking care of her mother, whose health was rapidly deteriorating. Her daughter's status there was a constant source of worry for Mrs. Martin, who insisted at first that her professors provide her with private lessons in their homes. Her course work was sporadic, given the demands of caring for her mother; only after her death in 1901 was Mary able to enter the North Carolina Medical School (the first two years of which were based at Davidson, the latter two in Charlotte). Unable to take anatomy courses—"It wasn't considered proper for me to go into a dissecting room with all those naked cadavers lying about," she explained. "Indeed it would have been considered highly unladylike"—Mary transferred to the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania at age twenty-nine and graduated as an MD in 1906.[23]

During those interim years at Davidson, Mary had met Eustace Sloop, a fifteen-year-old farm boy from nearby Mooresville who enrolled at the college in 1893. Given their differences in age (seven years) and academic rank—"he was only a very young freshman while I was a lady already graduated from college"—neither showed much interest in the other. It was only in sharing a first year of medical school eight years later that they became close acquaintances and colleagues, before they parted ways when she moved to Philadelphia to continue her studies and he stayed put to complete his. Upon graduating, Mary was turned down for foreign mission work by the Presbyterian Mission Board, which reasoned that she was too old to learn a foreign language or to withstand the "rigors of a tropical country." Annoyed by so arbitrary a restriction, she wryly noted in her memoir, "I wonder what those Presbyterian brethren would think if they knew that fifty years later this old woman could still tramp over the mountains around Crossnore!"[24] Instead, she accepted a position as the first resident physician at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia.

A year later, she and Eustace became engaged, and because he, too, was committed to medical mission work, they agreed that they would serve those far closer to home than Africans or Asians. They would settle in the mountains of western North Carolina. Both were familiar with the region, the Martins having spent summers in the newly established resort town of Blowing Rock, which her father came to know while searching out geological specimens in the area. It was there that they married in July 1908, she a thirty-five-year-old bride and he a groom of twenty-eight. The next day, the couple proceeded by horseback to the village of Plumtree, the center of a local mica mining industry, where Eustace had already made a start as a circuit-riding physician.

Mary later commented that "Doctor and I knew that living in the mountains would be different . . . quite primitive, and often difficult." The separation from friends and family proved painful as well, as did the "sense of isolation experienced only by those who live far back in the deep coves." The ache of loneliness, she admitted, "would at times deeply trouble us." And yet, like so many men and women who committed to this work during that era, the Sloops realized that their sense of mission could be fulfilled here, within their own state, just as well as it could elsewhere around the globe. Ultimately they connected to these fellow North Carolinians in ways that might not have been as easy to do with those in Africa or Asia. "Doctor and I had wanted to be missionaries," she insisted, "and what could be better than to spend our lives helping to bring to these people of the mountains, these fine, high-principled men and women so capable of great things, a more fruitful, happier manner of living?"[25]

As the Sloops' practice quickly grew and encompassed an ever-widening

area, it became apparent that Plumtree was "off-center" in terms of where the demands for their services took them. Several local acquaintances urged the doctors to move to Crossnore, across a high ridge but only seven miles away. After three years at Plumtree, they did just that, and on December 11, 1911, moved to a village that at its core consisted of five houses; a combination schoolhouse, church, and courtroom; one store; and a population of just twenty-three. Little had changed, Mary noted, since its founding forty years earlier.[26]

The Sloops moved into the brand-new county of Avery, which had been established earlier in 1911 as North Carolina's one hundredth and final county. In 1920, the first year for which there are population figures for the new county, a little over 10,000 people resided in Avery, and 181 of those called Crossnore home (which leads one to question Sloop's much sparser figure for the decade before).[27] The far side of the county had been accessible by rail from Tennessee as early as 1882, built to haul out the iron and iron ore mined at Cranberry; another set of rails was constructed in the Linville Falls area in 1894. Both served the booming lumber industry and, as a by-product, made the area accessible for tourists and summer residents. The resort town of Linville, at the base of Grandfather Mountain, long the area's most prominent attraction, was flourishing by the turn of the century.[28] And yet Crossnore was one of several pockets in the new county that remained more remote and unaffected by these economic developments so near them, with most residents having seen little of the benefits of tourism, industry, or railroad access to the outside world.

Sloop recounted in detail her memories of their first Sunday in Crossnore when they attended a daylong series of church services and Sunday school classes, all of which were conducted in the dark, gloomy, and dilapidated multipurpose building that had been built as a log structure forty years earlier and was later covered by what were then warped planks. "It was little more than a shed," she wrote, that looked as if "it had been built by materials from the Ark." Mary carried her Bible with her, and after the Sunday school class in which she had periodically looked up and quoted passages from it, those in the class gathered around her to have a closer look at her Bible. "Many of them, men and women, parents of large families, could not read or write, I was reasonably certain," she wrote. "Others could read, but not well. But all of them seemed interested." If they would like a Bible like hers, the Oxford Teachers Bible, she told them that she would make the same bargain with them as she had grown up with at home in Davidson—that she would give such a Bible to anyone who could recite two hundred verses.[29]

A few days later, the children's Sunday school teacher came to Sloop's house and recited all two hundred verses on the spot, claiming that "she was a

powerful-busy woman and didn't see any reason why [she] should come two times." A day or two later, a young boy came to visit and was equally prepared to earn his Bible. His quota of verses consisted of the "begats" in Genesis. He began with Adam and moved methodically through them until she began to wonder when he would reach Methuselah, "the only one of my ancient fathers I could remember and whose name I could pronounce," she quipped. He did eventually reach that point, "but not even then did the procession of begats end. The boy was not to stop until Noah had begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth." While Sloop wished that she had provided him and others with some guidance in the verses they selected, she found the performance "marvelous" and proclaimed that "such earnestness I had never seen before. That boy became one of the most purposeful Christians I have ever known," she wrote. He grew up to become a minister. Thus began her educational mission that would expand so dramatically over the next few years.[30]

Mary and Eustace were well aware when they arrived in Crossnore of the inadequacy of schooling in the mountains, with most communities having no more than one-room schools taught by a single teacher. She sensed in Crossnore's residents a real hunger for learning and soon set her sights on providing a more substantial facility than the dilapidated all-purpose building that had always been the community's only school. One of her favorite anecdotes—and one that typified the humor she brought to so much of her life story—involved the momentous day in 1913 when that building was to be dragged from its site by fourteen yoked oxen to allow for a new, three-room schoolhouse. They proved to be unruly beasts of burden, and when given the signal to pull by their owners, they "went in every direction but forward" and became entangled in their harnesses. After two futile attempts, the old mountain man in charge of the operation came up to Mrs. Sloop, who had situated herself right in the thick of things, and asked her to move farther back to watch. She refused, saying she wasn't at all afraid of the oxen, and insisted she could move quickly out of the way if they headed toward her. After another attempt or two, the foreman approached her again, this time explaining, "You see we got to get them oxen apullin' straight ahead if we're agoin' to move this here schoolhouse, and them oxen don't understand what to do when we speak to 'em in the language we have to use when you're around." So she moved, the men "cussed in the oxen's ears, and the animals plunged straight forward without a hitch." For Sloop, the lesson learned was simply "that these mountain people can do anything if you'll just let them do it their own way," a remarkable assessment not often heard among the many outsiders who went into the region convinced of just the opposite.[31]

A new building was merely the start. More of a challenge was persuading local residents "that we couldn't do any good toward improving these schools unless we improved the teachers. We talked to them about having teachers with college educations, and so would be capable of teaching in a way that the local young people, who had only finished a few grades themselves, could not."[32] Given that this was a county school (not a private or denominational school, as were most of those established by Appalachian mission workers), and thus subject to state standards, Sloop realized that in order to qualify for more state-funded teachers, more students had to attend regularly, and she made that her top priority in those early years. Through her efforts, Avery County became only the second county in North Carolina to enact a compulsory school attendance law, and despite the fact that many found such government interference offensive and claimed their older children especially were needed to work at home, she also agreed to serve as the county's court-appointed truant officer.[33]

An early test case came when she staged a hearing in the home of a recalcitrant grist mill owner who refused to let his fifteen-year-old son come to school. Sloop swore out a warrant for his arrest and headed to his house with a deputy to bring him in. With his six "pistol-toting" sons accompanying their father on their front porch, the deputy sized up the opposition and promptly fled the scene, and the sheriff himself finally made the arrest in the middle of the night after family and friends had dispersed. Soon after, Sloop took sixteen sets of parents to court in nearby Newland. They had hired a lawyer who insisted that this outsider, this woman, had no authority to force their children into school. When her own pleadings for the merits of more education failed to move the parents or their lawyer, she handed the text of the new law over to the latter and asked him to read it aloud. According to her later account, he did so and then conceded the point. "Blame if'n she ain't right," he told his clients, "You'uns 'ull have to let them youngins go to school, and hoe that corn and them taters yer own selves." At other times, she found that bribery was more effective than legal threats, and former students confided to a reporter in 1948 that their successes had stemmed from bargains made by Mrs. Sloop with their parents, which ranged from her providing warm clothing to covering all fees. She drew the line when one defiant father insisted that he would let his twelve-year-old daughter attend school only if Sloop hired another girl to do her work while she was away. He ended up in jail until he agreed to do his own hiring.[34]

Because North Carolina required—and authorized funding for—only four months of public education in the 1910s, Mary's quest for an eight- or nine-month school year meant that she had to come up with a means of financing the difference. How she did so came about by pure chance and turned into the

most widely told story associated with the Crossnore legacy. One of her students (who one observer called "the most promising and most pathetic") was a twelve-year-old named Hepsy, a motherless child who was responsible for the care of her eight younger siblings, some of whom accompanied her when she came to the class. When she didn't appear one day, Sloop inquired about her and was told by the other girls that Hepsy was about to be married and move to the other side of the ridge. She was horrified at the news, and even more so when she found that the man to whom she was betrothed was a drunkard and moonshiner twice her age. While state law required a girl to be fourteen before she could marry, mountaineers often skirted that limit, according to Sloop, by reasoning that as soon as a child had passed her thirteenth birthday, as Hepsy would soon do, she had "turned to fourteen."

Mary recognized that further education was the only escape hatch for Hepsy, and since she had completed all the grade levels Crossnore had to offer, she should be sent across the mountain to the Lees-McRae Institute for Girls in Banner Elk, whose curriculum offered several more years of schooling. She eventually convinced the father to call off the wedding and let Hepsy have this chance, but only if Sloop arranged for funding and clothing. The former she took care of by asking friends at Davidson to contribute toward Hepsy's expenses at Banner Elk, which they did. As for her clothing, Mary wrote two cousins in Virginia who she thought were about Hepsy's size and asked if they had any old clothes they would be willing to donate. They agreed and sent a trunk full of clothes, but when it was delivered by wagon several weeks later, she opened it and discovered that all of the dresses were black. (The cousins had been in mourning and had even thrown in black bonnets with crepe veils.) Rather than send the twelve-year-old off to school dressed in black, Sloop decided to sell the clothes to local women and use the money earned to buy gingham cloth from which she would make Hepsy's dresses herself. It proved to be an inspired solution, as mountain women loved to wear black and quickly bought out the full stock of clothing. "Soon the whole valley was in mourning!" Sloop declared, and the women, so proud of their store-bought, well-made dresses, begged her to get more.[35]

Thus was born what quickly became a steady source of funding that served the Crossnore School and community for many years. Sloop had no more qualms about soliciting clothing than she did money, and soon secondhand apparel poured in from church groups, civic clubs, and student organizations all over the country. A local couple took over the operation of a permanent store constructed to accommodate the volume, and the demand of local women for quality clothing at modest prices meant that they themselves provided much of

the funding that would in turn educate their sons and daughters. This unique funding source quickly attracted national attention and served as the "angle" on which so much of the journalistic coverage of Sloop and the school centered.[36]

The results were both dramatic and inspiring. In a brochure Sloop printed in 1921 both to raise money and solicit clothes, she was able to proclaim that the "big school house, modern in every way" consisted of "fourteen rooms, steam heating, drinking fountains, sewage, electric lights and bells, individual desks, recitation benches and laboratory equipment." She touted plans for a "teacherage," a barn for the seventy-five-acre model farm, a large industrial building, and a separate high school building. "Old Clothes Have Done It All," she proclaimed in all caps, and elaborated:

> It was just a little backwoods public school, enlarged to this extent because folks sent us their old clothes to sell. Three hundred children taught by college graduates, who a few years ago had teachers who could not pass the 6th grade. Sixty pupils in an accredited high school, who ten years ago had no hope of getting beyond the 5th grade. Seventy-five per cent of these are planning to go to college, and when the principal asked them how they would accomplish it, they said they didn't know, but they reckoned Mrs. Sloop did.[37]

Five years later, with clothing sales amounting to $15,000 annually, Crossnore had expanded into a boarding school with dormitories (funded by the Daughters of the American Revolution [DAR], of which Sloop was a proud and active member) and a gymnasium. The school had become "a $90,000 institution in which teachers who are specialized give first-class high school educations and vocational training to anyone who wants it enough to come and get it in one of the best-equipped schools in the state," as a journalist put it in 1926. "No magician's trunk has ever held marvels comparable with those Mary Martin Sloop got out of this battered old carrier of mourning garments."[38] The "miracle," it seems, was fully under way. Over the next thirty years, her entrepreneurial bent became even more evident as she and Doctor purchased additional acreage and built a sawmill on it, to generate more income for the school, and a weaving room, inspired by the Berea College model, in which students produced woven goods to sell on site and at nearby gift shops. By 1950 a fervent admirer summed up her achievement as a campus "consisting of 20 buildings, 250 acres of land, and a spirit that has permeated every cove and hillside of this inaccessible territory."[39]

The school maintained a unique status as both a public and a private school that allowed it to serve both local children and boarders from throughout the region. While fiercely maintaining its independence from any sponsoring

organization, Mary's ties to Davidson College remained a vital resource during its formative years. Mary's older brother, William J. Martin Jr., a chemistry professor at Davidson, became the college's president in 1912 and served in that capacity until 1929. She took full advantage of his position to serve Crossnore's interests.[40] Letters exchanged between brother and sister suggest a symbiotic relationship between the two schools. Brother Will facilitated admission to Davidson for worthy Crossnore students identified by Mary, providing them with scholarships, finding part-time jobs for them on campus and in town, and matching them up with the most cost-efficient local boardinghouses. He supplied her with commencement speakers from among his faculty and, on occasion, provided the school with personal loans and other forms of financial support.[41]

Mary also sought her brother's help in recruiting Davidson graduates to come teach at Crossnore, which became a critical need as the high school became a reality by the early 1920s and as she set her sights on its accreditation. An exchange in 1922 suggests how the process worked and sheds some light on the school's financial and personnel situation soon after it had expanded to include a full high school curriculum. In response to an inquiry from his sister about good prospects to teach history and coach various sports, President Martin responded with a description of several likely candidates but noted two in particular being courted by the McCallie School in Chattanooga. One of them, he thought, a Thomas Freeman, might find Crossnore more to his liking, in that he was "a country boy." "The fact that he is both athletic and musical would help you out" as well, he noted.[42]

Freeman did indeed express an interest in the position, but Martin reported to his sister that he had concerns about how much the job would pay, given that "he has to help his brother and sisters and has some debt on him, and will have to go where he can save as much money as possible." Martin "told him that he could go to no place where he could save money better than at Crossnore, though he might not get as much gross as he would somewhere else." This led to a revealing exchange between brother and sister over teachers' salaries. Will suggested that if they could pay him as much as $125 a month, "he could probably save $90, which I thought he could do there as well as anywhere." Mary explained the salary scale for the school's faculty, which at that point numbered six to eight teachers. "We have several A.B. teachers," she informed President Martin, "women from Class A colleges, and they get a hundred a month the first [year] and an increase of ten dollars or more each year that they teach." But, she acknowledged, "men may be in such demand that they get larger salaries."[43]

Because they were part of the county school system, the ultimate decision as to what they could pay Freeman would come from the county, though she

confided, "I am willing to supplement in any way to be able to secure him. He is just what we want and we will not be satisfied with anything less worthwhile. We are determined to have our school placed on the accredited list next year, and so many have nothing on the faculty but college graduates and our boys need another man who can help them with their athletics . . . and we'd be willing to pay a little more for the musical one." Ultimately, Freeman came and taught at Crossnore for three years before becoming a Presbyterian minister who enjoyed a long career serving congregations in Appalachian Tennessee and Virginia.[44]

One of the most lasting contributions Davidson made to the Crossnore community was electricity. Mountain homes were lit by kerosene lamps or lanterns, which along with firelight, had been the only source of illumination for many of the operations the Sloops performed (one reason they began to perform so much surgery outdoors). Doctor, Mary wrote, was determined to bring electricity to the region. When the cost of independent home systems proved prohibitive, he decided to build an electric plant himself by damming a nearby stream. He remembered from his student days at Davidson that two old dynamos had been discarded on the edge of campus when the college bought into the Southern Power (later Duke) Company. His brother-in-law, the president, consented to let Sloop take and "play with" one of those dynamos. The real challenge lay in transporting the 2,300-pound machine up to Crossnore from the train station fifteen miles away. Mary took much pleasure in relating her role (in her husband's absence) in supervising the treacherous trek made by four horses pulling the massive dynamo by wagon to the dam. She devoted a full chapter of her memoir to the extraordinary feat of first moving it into a makeshift powerhouse that Doctor had built and, then, through Doctor's technical skill and resourceful improvisation, making it operable initially for their own home, then the school, and ultimately for many other mountain cabins as well.[45]

Sloop was constantly attuned to the fact that education was merely one means, if certainly the most crucial, of bettering the lives of the mountain people. While she continued to claim (when it suited her purposes) that they knew best how to get things done if left alone to do so, she never hesitated to challenge antiquated and debilitating customs when she could, as she did with the premature marriage rate to which Hepsy and so many others fell victim. Alcoholism was among the most rampant of such problems, with moonshine the primary culprit. "Liquor was bad for everyone," she wrote, "but it was particularly bad for the young people, and I was especially interested in these young folks." Boys learned to drink moonshine from their fathers and uncles, and this led to violent confrontations and to wasted lives in a variety of forms. Thus she tackled it with as much fervor as she did school attendance; once again, she became an agent of the law.

Having seen church meetings and school events disrupted by "young swains" who milled outside drinking while waiting to take their girlfriends or wives home, Sloop convinced the deputy sheriff to come from the county seat of Newland to a church meeting in Crossnore and to deputize her, her husband, and a trusted local partner in their venture. Once deputized and armed, she stood before the crowd and announced to her fellow deputies in front of the crowd assembled outside the church, "Gentlemen, in the name of the Lord and North Carolina, shoot the first man who dares interrupt this meeting." Sloop claimed to have sworn out warrants for more than a hundred moonshiners and bootleggers and devoted several chapters of her memoir to stories of the impassioned war she waged against them. Constantly on the lookout for stills or suspicious activity, Sloop became an active partner of the sheriff's office in reporting violations and even planning and executing raids, several of which she participated in herself. In one celebrated incident in 1917 she and "a quaking neighbor" took a wheelbarrow up to a still she had discovered in a cove on the edge of the school property, dismantled it, and wheeled it to Newland. "The colossal nerve of that old sot in placing that contraption of the devil on our land!" she declared of the culprit, and sent the sheriff off with a warrant to arrest him.[46]

This was merely one means by which the Sloops sought to raise the standard of living and quality of life for mountain families. They spent much of the 1920s and 1930s implementing a remarkable range of social, economic, and health reforms, often in the face of considerable skepticism or even outright opposition from their intended beneficiaries. These ranged from poor dietary habits, to ineffective agricultural practices, to a woeful lack of any effort to market what they did grow. Mary brought a representative from the State Agriculture Department in Raleigh to Avery County, who after testing the soil and altitude up and down the Linville Valley, advised farmers to concentrate on Irish potatoes as their most likely "revenue crops."[47]

This in turn led the Sloops to campaign for paved roads into the area, the lack of which proved to be the major hindrance in marketing anything the locals produced. They lobbied state officials, from Governor Cameron Morrison, who would be remembered as the state's "good roads governor," to all legislators from the mountains, to support a proposed $50 million expenditure for schools and roads. This was enacted into law in 1921. Not only would such roads provide farmers with easier access to markets elsewhere in the state and beyond, they would also serve to bring more children to school and allow some who were boarders to live at home and still attend every day.

Once the state funding was authorized, the roads issue became a local one—where in Avery County would these expenditures be made? Crossnore had to

compete with other communities throughout the area, and as Mary Sloop put it, it "was so little, and so isolated, and the roads to Crossnore would be so expensive to build. But the roads had to be built!" She attended many planning meetings and pushed officials hard to make a north–south route along the eastern side of the Blue Ridge a priority. When one commissioner pointed out that there was already a parallel road running along the other side of the ridge and that "it looks like Mrs. Sloop thinks that Avery County rates twins," she was quick to respond that the Lord controlled the coming of twins, and by running the Blue Ridge right through the middle of the county, He had made twin roads necessary. It was eventually approved, and even those once reluctant to see bulldozers and other road-building machines thrust themselves across their land came to appreciate just what the new road meant for their lives. And they all knew whom they had to thank for it. One elderly man stated, "You know, I've always said I'd die before I'd vote the Democratic ticket, but when Miz Sloop runs for president, I aim to vote for her." The Avery County section of that road, now Highway 221, is named the "Mary Martin Sloop Highway."[48]

Sloop's efforts on all of these fronts, along with the continued expansion of the Crossnore School, led to accolades from a variety of sources. She was recognized by the DAR, and the school became a showcase for its North Carolina chapters, which eventually made the DAR among the school's most significant funding sources.[49] She received an honorary degree from the still all-male Davidson College in 1925, the first ever bestowed on a woman. It was in the 1950s that more national recognition came Mary Sloop's way. In 1951 the *Progressive Farmer* named her the nation's "Rural Woman of the Year." The same year, she was recognized as America's "Mother of the Year" by the American Federation of Women's Clubs and traveled with her daughter, Emma, to New York City to accept the honor. This followed her having been given the same honor by the North Carolina chapter a year earlier. That much of the rearing of the Sloops' two children, Emma and Will, had been given over to local women during those early years in which Mary had been so intent in building her school might have made this particular award somewhat ironic, except for the fact that she had been such a maternal figure for so many mountain children over the years.[50]

Sloop took great pride in her own children's achievements. There was never any indication that they resented their mother's neglect during their childhoods. Daughter Emma attended medical school at Vanderbilt and returned to Crossnore to work with her father in overseeing the hospital, which served as his most enduring contribution to the region. Built in 1928 this twenty-bed facility served an ever-increasing clientele, in part due to accessibility by the newly built roads into the community, which allowed patients to come to Cross-

nore rather than the doctor having to make the arduous circuit to so many of their homes. Son Will, three years younger than Emma, was educated at the University of North Carolina and became a dentist, who also returned to Crossnore to establish his practice.[51]

An executive at McGraw-Hill Publishers saw Mary Sloop's "Mother of the Year" acceptance speech on television and approached her before she left New York with the proposal that she tell her life story in book form. When she pled a lack of time and writing experience, the executive approached a popular North Carolina journalist and author, LeGette Blythe, to ask if he would be interested in working with her on an autobiography. Blythe, who lived a few miles from Davidson in Huntersville, had heard of Sloop but remained skeptical that she merited a full book until he went to Crossnore and spent an afternoon listening to her "recounting yarn after yarn . . . telling of her experiences in this hill country, describing in her inimitable way the people of the Linville Valley." Totally enamored by her energy, her charm, and her seemingly endless supply of stories, he made that the first of six or eight such sessions, both in Crossnore and Huntersville, in which Sloop reminisced, philosophized, and told stories in almost stream-of-consciousness form into a tape recorder. Blythe then transcribed that wealth of raw material and shaped it into what became one of McGraw-Hill's most popular books published in 1953.[52]

One of Crossnore's chroniclers wrote of his impressions of both Sloops when he visited them in the late 1920s, but he moved quickly to focus on Mary and in a few short sentences aptly tapped into the key to her extraordinary success story. "One of the couple," he wrote, "is today a great blond bearded Viking of a man, wearing tawny khaki, the color of the woods he loves so well. The other is a woman ample of brain and form, with an energy that is like that of a mountain torrent, and a flow of words that keeps one listening delighted for hours." Obviously captivated by her, he continued:

> To hear Mrs. Sloop tell the story of Crossnore is not only to be inspired by her burning devotion to one great purpose, but to watch pictures livelier than any movie go dancing before our eyes, and to be convulsed by her unfailing humor. It is no wonder that she has been able to talk people into doing whatever she wants no matter how determined they have been at the start to do only what they wanted, and this whether she is addressing a legislature that does not desire to give her good roads, or a bootlegger who does not desire her to confiscate his secret still.[53]

Miracle in the Hills only confirmed these assessments of Sloop from a quarter century earlier. But for all the adulation and enthusiasm Sloop generated from

outsider observers, it is not clear that she was as universally appreciated by the local residents who knew her best. As much as her book and other outreach efforts conveyed her genuine affection and respect for these highlanders as individuals, some felt there was a patronizing tone in her descriptions of their cultural backwardness and inadequacies. While not untrue of the region, especially for the early years, some sensed that Sloop put undue emphasis on those hard realities in order to accentuate her own achievements on their behalf and to convey more dramatically how she and her husband had transformed their world (though evidence suggests that little of this resentment came from her students, former students, or their parents).[54]

That patronizing tone was typical of many of her fellow missionaries, educators, and doctors who devoted themselves to southern Appalachia and to its people. But like them, Mary Sloop combined a strong sense of purpose and willpower with remarkable resourcefulness, and it is understandable that she should want to celebrate—some would say flaunt—her accomplishments, as she did so fully in *Miracle in the Hills*. Few of her contemporaries lasted as long or committed themselves to as wide a range of social and economic reform. Her energies, which began in partnership with her husband to provide medical care for mountain people, were soon consumed in the establishment and constant expansion of a school that rivaled any in the North Carolina mountains in terms of its success and longevity.[55] When she saw other problems—poverty, alcoholism, child abuse, malnutrition, poor farming techniques, poor roads, and poor housing—she was quick to put herself on the front lines in resolving them and, for the most part, did so quite effectively.[56]

With still nearly another decade ahead of her, she mused about her own longevity early in her memoir. Noting that she could see Grandfather Mountain, considered by many geologists to be the world's oldest rock face, from her house at Crossnore, she compared herself to it: "My old bones may be aching, for I'm an ancient rock myself—though I insist I'm no fossil. But even eighty years, by some standards of measurement, is a mighty short period. And when I look upon Grandfather I feel young, and transient. And very humble."[57]

One might question that last trait, given how relentless Sloop was in promoting herself, her work, and the school. She was obviously proud—and justifiably so—of all she and her husband had accomplished, often against considerable odds; but as several of these assessments make clear, she dominated the spotlight. Whether intentional or not, most observers came away from Crossnore with far greater appreciation of Mary's achievements than of Eustace's. The medical services he brought to the area—from his early circuit-riding practice to the later hospital he established and ran, later in partnership with both of

their children—were at least the equal of Mary's accomplishment on the educational front. Yet they never seem to have been more than a footnote in the journalistic coverage that focused so fully on her.[58]

No doubt her more outgoing personality, her knack for storytelling, her sense of humor and willingness to laugh at herself, and her enthusiasm for the place and the people they served endeared her to a national press and public. Her place in the spotlight was also a function of Eustace's modesty and self-effacement, which Mary actually acknowledged in *Miracle in the Hills*, even as she relegated his work to the background, especially in the book's latter sections—when she gave up on their medical partnership, an area in which she makes clear she was never his equal. Finally, one wonders if her seven-year seniority in age made her a more dominant partner in their marriage in some respects or gave her the confidence to be the more visible and vocal spouse than a woman of the same age as or younger than her husband would have been.

Given what a public figure she became, indeed made herself into, it remains all the more puzzling—and sadly ironic—that Mary Sloop seems to have fallen between the cracks in the vast outpouring of recent scholarship on Appalachian mission work and the many remarkable women so integral to that movement. Perhaps the fact that she came to her mountain mission with a husband has denied her a more prominent place in a history that seems to privilege the achievements of single women. Or perhaps if she had continued to pursue a career in medicine—in which she was truly a trailblazer in that time and place (Dr. Wharton was the only other female physician who served in southern Appalachia during this period), she would gain greater attention from current chroniclers of women's work in the region. Or perhaps the fact that the Crossnore School was a public school, part of the Avery County system, kept it below the radar screen of historians who have kept their focus more firmly fixed on the outside denominations, agencies, or other institutional forces that proved so central to Appalachia's medical, educational, and social missions.

Whatever the reason for the current neglect of Mary Sloop's place in this historical context, it should make us all the more grateful that she worked so much harder than most to make her story known, even if it was less for posterity than for her own purposes and those of the school and community she chronicled so fully.

NOTES

1. Mary T. Martin Sloop with LeGette Blythe, *Miracle in the Hills* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), frontispiece and photograph opposite p. 69.

2. Quote from *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 28, 1951.

3. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 86.

4. Ibid., 86–87.

5. Ibid., 30–32.

6. Ibid., 30–32, 137–38.

7. Mildred Harrington, "The Magician's Trunk," *American Magazine*, April 1926, 5.

8. Ibid. Sloop reproduced Harrington's article as a brochure that she circulated as part of a fund-raising effort in 1957. Copy in Crossnore Papers, in the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. (hereafter ASU).

9. Winifred and Frances Kirkland, *Girls Who Made Good* (1930; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 111–20.

10. Mrs. J. A. Yarbrough, "Crossnore Builds New Lives out of Old Clothes," *Charlotte Observer*, January 22, 1934, section 3, 2–3. (The title quoted in the text is the second-level headline to this article.)

11. John Murray, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," draft of article published in the *Saturday Evening Post* (in 1948), 1, Eury Appalachian Collection. The Crossnore School perpetuates the use of the term. Its biennial magazine is entitled *Miracle in the Mountains*, and a group of major donors call themselves the Miracle Mountain Club.

12. Neither Sloop nor the Crossnore School rate entries in the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006); nor is she mentioned in an article devoted to "Women as Educators," 1557–58, though the weaving program at Crossnore is featured in the encyclopedia's section on "Crafts," 835–36. The only book-length studies of Sloop and the Crossnore School since her death have been two children's books: Richard Cooper, *Dr. Mary Martin Sloop: The Woman Who Moved Mountains* (Raleigh: Creative Productions, 1988), which is drawn almost totally from her *Miracle in the Hills*; and Annie Hall Whitt, *The Suitcases: Three Orphaned Sisters in the Great Depression* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1982), a memoir by a former Crossnore student. An informal county history, Michael C. Hardy, *Remembering Avery County: Old Tales from North Carolina's Youngest County* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2007), devotes chap. 15 to the Sloops and Crossnore; one of the best overviews of Sloop is an entry in Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Herring Wilson, *North Carolina Women Making History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 266–70.

13. The best study of traditional mountain medicine remains Anthony P. Cavender, *Folk Medicine in the Southern Appalachians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

14. Sandra Lee Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), esp. chaps. 1 and 2. Barney makes no mention of Sloop, perhaps because her study is focused on Central Appalachia. Nor does Sloop rate any acknowledgement in broader works on female physicians, including Cathy Luchetti, *Medicine Women: The Story of Early American Women Doctors* (New York: Crown, 1998); Elisaeth Brooks, *Women Healers through History* (London: Women's Press, 1993); and Ann K. Boulis and Jerry A. Jacobs, *The Changing Face of Medicine: Women Doctors and the Evolution of Health Care in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2008).

15. May Cravath Wharton, *Doctor Woman of the Cumberlands: The Autobiography of May Cravath Wharton* (privately published, 1953).

16. Jess Stoddart, *Challenge and Change in Appalachia: The Story of Hindman Settlement School* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), chap. 1 (on Hindman School); James S. Greene III, "Progressives in the Kentucky Mountains: The Formative Years of the Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1913–1930" (PhD diss., Ohio State

University, 1982); Karen W. Tice, "School-Work and Mother Work: The Interplay of Maternalism and Cultural Politics in the Educational Narratives of Kentucky Settlement Workers, 1910–1930," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 4 (Fall 1998): 195–224; Deborah Lynn Blackwell, "The Ability to Do Much Larger Work: Gender and Reform in Appalachia" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1998); Nancy K. Forderhase, "Eve Returns to the Garden: Women Reformers in Appalachian Kentucky during the Early Twentieth Century," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 85 (Summer 1987): 237–61; and Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin, "Cora Wilson Stewart and the Illiteracy Crusade: 'Moonlight Schools' and Progressive Era Reform" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1996). For a broader context to these efforts, see Anne Meis Kufner and Christine Woyschner, eds., *The Educational Efforts of Women's Organizations, 1890–1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), which includes one essay set in Appalachia: Andra Knecht, "'We Are Here from the City, and We Are Here to Educate You': The Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs and the Tallulah Falls School," pp. 215–34.

17. On Presbyterian efforts, see Marcia Clark Meyers, "Presbyterian Home Missions in Appalachia: A Feminine Enterprise" (MDiv thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1970); and H. Davis Yeuell, *Moving Mountains: A History of Presbyterians and Reformed Faith at Work in Appalachia* (Amesville, Ohio: Coalition for Appalachian Ministry, 1985). The best overviews of the Protestant educational mission to Appalachia are found in Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), chap. 1; and John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 200–203. Neither makes any mention of the Sloops or the Crossnore School. On the Campbells, see Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine*, chap. 2; and William B. McCarthy, "Olive Dame Campbell and Appalachian Tradition," in Tom Cheesman and Sigrid Rieuwerts, eds., *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of F. J. Child* (New York: Peter Lang, 1977), 69–80; on Penland, see Lucy Morgan with Legette Blythe, *Gift from the Hills: Miss Lucy Morgan's Story of Her Unique Penland School* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958). This was Blythe's follow-up project to Sloop's *Miracle in the Hills*. For a broader sense of women's work in southern Appalachia, see several articles in a special issue of the *Appalachian Journal* 37 (Spring/Summer 2010) devoted to women in and of the region.

On a personal note, both of my grandmothers taught at Presbyterian mission schools in Appalachia before they were married, and both knew the Sloops, though in very different contexts. My paternal grandmother, Nanny McIntyre [Inscoe], taught music and home economics from 1903 to 1909 at the Lees-McRae Institute for Girls in Banner Elk, N.C., only a few miles from Crossnore; my maternal grandmother, Rubie Ray [Cunningham], taught at two one-room schools established by Edward O. Guerrant in Kentucky, one in Canyon Falls (Breathitt County) and one in Levi (Owsley County), from 1918 to 1921. See Inscoe, ed., "Memories of a Presbyterian Mission Worker in the Kentucky Mountains, 1918–1921: An Interview with Rubie Ray Cunningham," *Appalachian Journal* 15 (Winter 1988), 144–60; on Lees-McRae's early years, see Margaret Tufts Neal, *And Set Aglow a Sacred Flame: History of the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association* (Banner Elk, N.C.: Pudding Stone Press, Lees-McRae College, 1983), 36–37.

18. Harrington, "The Magician's Trunk," 4. The Sloops had the Crossnore School incorporated early on; while remaining a public school, they drew up a charter stating that no denomination would ever own or control the school, but it would be governed by a board of trustees. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 149.

19. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 8.

20. Ibid., 12–13. Sloop noted that the house in which she grew up was the president's house and was the same one in which Stonewall Jackson's wife had been born and raised. (Mrs. Jackson's father was Robert Hall Morrison, the founding president of Davidson.)

21. Sloop included variations of this story in nearly all interviews and self-produced versions of her life from at least 1930 on. See Kirkland and Kirkland, *Girls Who Made Good*, 112; Maloney, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," 8; and Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 14–15, in which she refers to her young charges as "pickaninnies" and "little darkies."

22. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 12–13.

23. Ibid., 14–16.

24. Ibid., 19; and Harrington, "Magician's Trunk," 4. Harrington reported that an additional reason for her not being allowed to go to Africa was that the Mission Board no longer sent any white women there, reasoning that "only colored women can stand the terrible climate and conditions."

25. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 21; and quote from *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 28, 1951.

26. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 46–47.

27. Population figures from "Western North Carolina—a State within a State: An Economic and Social Survey of the Eighteen Counties Comprising This Rich Empire of Industry, Resorts, Agriculture, and Mining" (Asheville, N.C.: Asheville Citizen-Times, 1933). Three other Avery County communities had between four hundred and three hundred residents in 1920: Elk Park, Banner Elk, and the county seat, Newland.

28. Horton Cooper, *History of Avery County, North Carolina* (Asheville, N.C.: Biltmore Press, 1964), 44–45; and Hardy, *Remembering Avery County*, 46–49. Avery County was carved out of pieces of Watauga, Mitchell, and Caldwell Counties.

29. Cooper, *History of Avery County*, 48, 51.

30. Ibid., 53–55.

31. Legette Blythe, who shared coauthor credit on her memoir, related that this was one of the first and, for him, most appealing stories he heard from Mary Sloop when they initially met to discuss the book. See Legette Blythe, "This One Was Fun," *The State*, March 21, 1953, 5–6. Final quote from Maloney, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," 4.

32. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 56.

33. Maloney, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," 4.

34. Ibid.

35. Hepsy's story is told, in slightly varying versions, from the earliest coverage of Crossnore on, all perpetrated by Mary Sloop herself. The version here draws on accounts in Maloney, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," 1–2; Harrington, "The Magician's Trunk," 1–2 (quotation from p. 1); and Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 69–73.

36. Typical of article titles and newspaper headlines over the years were "Crossnore Builds New Lives out of Old Clothes," *Charlotte Observer*, January 23, 1934; "Old Clothes, Strong Will Make Model of Crossnore," *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, November 6, 1949; and "Dr. Mary Martin Sloop, What She Built out of Old Clothes," chap. 15 of Kirkland and Kirkland, *Girls Who Made Good*.

37. "Crossnore School" brochure, 1921, copy in Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

38. Harrington, "The Magician's Trunk," 3.

39. Maloney, "Grand Lady of the Blue Ridge," 1.

40. On Martin's presidency, see Cornelia Rebekah Shaw, *Davidson College* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Press, 1923), written a decade into his tenure as president; Mary D. Beatty, *A History of Davidson College* (Davidson, N.C.: Briarpatch Press, 1988), chaps. 11–14; and "William Joseph Martin, Jr.," *Davidson Encyclopedia*, http://sites.davidson.edu/archives/encyclopedia/william-joseph-martin-jr (accessed April 10, 2013).

41. See scattered correspondence between Mary Sloop and President Martin, 1913–25, in the William J. Martin Jr. Presidential Papers, Davidson College Archives and Special Collections, E. H. Little Library, Davidson, N.C.

42. Martin to Sloop, March 23, 1933, ibid.

43. Sloop to Martin, March 28, 1922, ibid.

44. Ibid.; Clippings from the T. A. Freeman Alumni File, Davidson College Archives. His pastorates included Elizabethton, Tenn., and Jewell Hill and Tazewell, Va.; he also served as moderator of the Synod of Appalachia and executive secretary of the Abingdon, Va., Presbytery.

45. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, chap. 14.

46. Ibid., chaps. 19, 20, and 31 (quotation from p. 109); and Maloney, "Grand Old Lady of the Blue Ridge," 4–5.

47. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 120–24.

48. Ibid., 126–28.

49. That relationship with the DAR is ongoing. The January 2011 issue of *Miracle in the Mountains*, the Crossnore School magazine (pp. 4, 16–17), includes a photo spread entitled "National Bus Tour Brings DAR to Campus," documenting a visit made in October 2010, during which a bust of Mary Sloop was unveiled on campus.

50. Smith and Wilson, *North Carolina Women*, 269; on these and other honors, see the scrapbook of clippings in the Eustace C. Sloop Alumni File, Davidson Archives.

51. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 217; *Asheville Citizen-Times*, February 8, 1969, in scrapbook, Eustace C. Sloop Alumni File, Davidson Archives.

52. For Blythe's account of their collaboration, see "Blythe, Sloop, Recorder Great Team," *Charlotte News*, March 7, 1953; Blythe, "This One Was Fun," *The State*, March 21, 1953; and Blythe, "On Writing a Book with Dr. Sloop," in Richard Walser, ed., *The North Carolina Miscellany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 81–82.

53. Kirkland and Kirkland, *Girls Who Made Good*, 112–13.

54. This is based on an informal interview with Wake Forest historian Richard Zuber, who spent twelve years as a student at Crossnore from 1938 to 1950, and with several current residents of Crossnore, who asked to remain anonymous. Professor Zuber notes that in an informal survey of his classmates regarding *Miracle in the Hills*, they were all "highly favorable" of the book and had nothing but fond memories of Mrs. Sloop. E-mail correspondence with author, August 14, 2011.

55. Crossnore's high school closed in 1968, six years after Mary Sloop's death, when the Avery County high schools consolidated into a single school in Newland. Crossnore continued as a home for disadvantaged or troubled children and reemerged in full flower over the last decade as a charter school known as the Crossnore Academy, which is a unique mix of public school and strong private support. For more detail on its post-Sloop history, see the history and timeline on the Crossnore School's website: www.crossnoreschool.org. The author is also grateful for an unpublished article on the school's history by alumnus Richard Zuber.

56. One of the only other full memoirs by a fellow Appalachian reformer is that of Lucy Morgan, who established the Penland School. Coincidentally, it was the next book project undertaken by Legette Blythe after *Miracle in the Hills*. See Morgan with Blythe, *Gift from the Hills*.

57. Sloop, *Miracle in the Hills*, 6–7.

58. The chapel on the Crossnore campus, built in 1957, is named for him, the E. H. Sloop Chapel, but in the website description of it, he is identified as simply "the beloved husband of Dr. Mary Martin Sloop." See the "Tour of Campus" on http://www.crossnoreschool.org (accessed April 20, 2013).

Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Smith Reynolds

The Public Lives of Progressive North Carolina's Wealthiest Women

MICHELE GILLESPIE

Married to two of the wealthiest men in North Carolina, Edith Stuyvesant Dresser Vanderbilt (1873–1958) and Katharine Smith Reynolds (1880–1924) used their elevated social status, command of financial resources, and strong spousal support to lead significant reforms in their communities and across the state. While the two came from different social milieus and acquired fundamentally different educations in their youth, and although Edith Vanderbilt was not a native North Carolinian and Katharine Reynolds was, they shared a commitment to improving the social and economic circumstances of their fellow North Carolinians, secured regional and national reputations for their philanthropy, vision, and leadership, and were beloved by their fellow state residents.

Edith Vanderbilt, born into a prominent New York family listed in the Social Register, married George Washington Vanderbilt (1862–1914), Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt's great-grandson, and moved to his newly constructed Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, after their Paris wedding and Grand Tour honeymoon in 1898. The two presided for thirteen years over a 125,000-acre estate in a 250-room home modeled after a sixteenth-century French chateau. The Vanderbilts had one child, daughter Cornelia.

While the Vanderbilts constituted the epitome of the nation's upper crust, Katharine and R. J. Reynolds represented the state's homegrown elite. Born in Mt. Airy, North Carolina, Katharine married her first cousin, once removed, Richard Joshua Reynolds (1850–1918), founder and president of R. J. Reynolds

EDITH VANDERBILT DRIVING A TRACTOR WITH DAUGHTER CORNELIA STANDING BY, C. 1920

Courtesy of the Biltmore Company.

KATHARINE SMITH REYNOLDS AND CHILDREN, C. 1911

Courtesy of Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

Tobacco Company, in 1905. The two also honeymooned in Europe, returning to Winston-Salem, where the two eventually presided over a more modest country estate, one of Katharine's own making, on a thousand acres with a thirty-two-room colonial revival home. The couple had four children.[1]

Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Reynolds shared many experiences during their adulthoods, not the least being middle-aged widowhood. Edith's fifty-one-year-old husband suffered acute appendicitis and died from postsurgery complications in 1914. Four years later, Katharine lost her sixty-seven-year-old husband after his prolonged struggle with pancreatic cancer. Each woman had been an indispensable partner to her spouse, wielding considerable private influence and public authority during their thirteen-year marriages. Their prominent husbands' deaths, however, altered their social position and relative power, presenting each of them with a series of challenges, as well as new opportunities to test their abilities, explore their ambitions, and make their own decisions. This essay explores the course of both of these privileged women's public lives—as wives and as widows, as social reformers and as leaders—to highlight changing gendered expectations among the white elite in early twentieth-century North Carolina.

Social class made Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Reynolds exceptional North Carolina women for their time. Unlike most southern women, they did not lack for education, opportunity, or money, nor were they constrained by family, household, or work commitments, although they were not completely removed from them either. While they lived in a deeply rooted southern social order, a segregated world that cultivated social rules about white women's place to reinforce a brutal racial caste system, both Edith and Katharine were far more immune than most white women to the gendered strictures that racism imposed. Unfortunately, neither woman took to the pen and therefore did not leave behind great caches of personal letters, diaries, memoirs, or autobiographies. Still, enough public documents remain to trace their life stories, highlighting not only how these women fashioned their public selves but how they used their wealth and prominence to help reframe white women's public roles in North Carolina in the process. Their success at doing so is significant, for it signals changing attitudes about what constituted white elite and middle-class women's public responsibilities. More difficult to tease out is why these women pursued these new roles in the first place.

Although both these women engaged in a number of social causes, neither attacked the most pressing issues of the day. However significant their philanthropic giving and leadership positions, theirs was a commitment to social improvement, not social justice. They did not oppose the social behavior and legal

structures that oppressed southern black men, women, and children. While both supported woman suffrage, neither publicly advocated for the cause themselves. Nonetheless, both women engaged in a broad array of social reform efforts, and not simply as wealthy women benefactors aping awakening southern middle-class sensibilities. Initially, Katharine's pursuits generally aimed at improving the lives of women wage workers, many of whom were employed in her husband's tobacco factories, while Edith launched a craft-training program for mountain families. Both women subsequently took up the national call to do their part on the home front during World War I, providing strong leadership at the state and local levels. Both women championed agricultural reform as an antidote to widespread rural poverty. Both assumed balanced philanthropic giving with the assumption of leadership positions. Both were watched closely by the media, their public actions documented, whether in their society roles or as civic leaders. Their prominence, at a time when southern women's activism was often under siege—given the newness of women's public roles, and the hotly contested debate over woman suffrage—helped assuage concerns about women's leadership and visibility in general.

Although both Edith and Katharine came of age in the Victorian era, when restrictive ideals of "true womanhood" reigned supreme in American culture, their youthful experiences differed dramatically. Edith was not southern born, and therefore escaped the childhood indoctrination into the social mores of southern belle–hood Katharine was steeped in. Descended from the first Dutch governor of colonial New York, Edith and her four siblings were orphaned as young children and raised by their grandparents in Newport, Rhode Island. Financially strapped, Edith moved to Paris at the age of twenty-one to take advantage of the cheaper living there, placing herself squarely in the path of moneyed American bachelors touring abroad as well as titled Europeans. Four years later, after a whirlwind courtship, Edith wed the eminently eligible George Washington Vanderbilt III, the youngest child of industrialist William Henry Vanderbilt and his wife Maria Louisa Kissam.[2]

Katharine experienced a far more conventional upbringing. Her entrepreneurial father, owner of a tobacco warehouse and a land developer, and her hardworking mother, who owned shares in the local Blue Ridge Hotel in her own name along with her husband, were part of an emergent local elite in the rough-hewn town of Mt. Airy at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The eldest of six children and the apple of her parents' eyes, Katharine benefited from considerable privilege in that specific time and place, especially a good education, and exposure to arts and culture. But by the time she turned twenty-one

she had traveled no farther than a day's train ride from home, and had yet to see Baltimore, let alone New York or Paris.[3]

Despite their divergent backgrounds, Edith and Katharine had been raised in cultures that presumed a woman's lifetime profession was in fact marriage. Edith, notwithstanding her fine family name, lacked an inheritance. Like a character in an Edith Wharton novel, Edith had little choice but to marry well if she wanted to maintain her inherited social status. Although Katharine, who was attractive and charming too, was not "high society," she had grown up in a world deeply imbued with romanticized notions of southern white womanhood, where educated, attractive young women of "good families" were expected not only to marry but to marry well. For both Edith and Katharine, marriage, entailing the domestic support of a husband, his aspirations, and their future children, was both a destiny and career.

Interestingly, it was Katharine who wavered, not once but several times, on the path to her presumed future. Her selection of the North Carolina State Normal Institute—the first public school dedicated to white women's higher education in the state, especially the training of teachers—signaled her preference for pursuing an independent, wage-earning career of her own. Yet after three years of a progressive women's education, Katharine left Normal to enroll at Sullins College in Bristol, Virginia, a finishing school for the daughters of the finest Kentucky, Tennessee, and western North Carolina and Virginia families, suggesting she had elected to follow the traditional route to a good marriage after all. Although Sullins held frequent dances and balls to cultivate courtship and betrothals, Katharine did not marry upon graduation, despite her obvious charms as conveyed by her yearbook. While she vowed instead to move to New York to paint, she never arrived in Manhattan, returning to her family home to teach china painting.

Two years later her first cousin once removed, Richard J. Reynolds, one of the great captains of the tobacco industry and the founder and president of the nationally known R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, invited her to his factory town to work for him as one of his four personal secretaries. After eighteen months keeping his books in a southern society where single women of her social class risked their reputations to engage in paid work, Katharine accepted Dick's marriage proposal, despite the thirty years' difference in their ages.[4]

Marriage altered Katharine's and Edith's lives dramatically. But because each had wedded especially influential men, their roles as wives proved far more elastic than most. Reared with the expectation that their greatest lifetime achievement was to secure a suitable spouse, each turned that notion on its head, making public careers of their own, at first by sharing active public lives with

their husbands, but eventually by emerging as active public leaders in their own right—especially in the wake of their spouses' deaths.

Although Edith had married exceedingly well, she had also married the least public of industrialist William H. Vanderbilt's sons. Unlike his brothers, the studious George Washington Vanderbilt never entered the business world, preferring to use his grandfather's inheritance to build his magnificent estate on the French Broad River, replete with the largest private home in America, world-class livestock, a model conservation forest, and affiliated charities. As Gifford Pinchot, hired by Vanderbilt as a young man to manage his forests and later appointed the first chief of the U.S. Forestry Service, recalled, "George was a lover of art and the great outdoors, a slim, simple, and rather shy young man, too much and too long sheltered by female relatives." Vanderbilt had begun Biltmore in 1895 while still a bachelor with the instrumental help of famed landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted and celebrated architect Richard Morris Hunt. The resulting estate was a place of grandeur that captured America's imagination. Henry James pronounced Biltmore "a castle of enchantment . . . this modern miracle." Edith Wharton declared the park-like surroundings "this divine landscape." Vanderbilt entertained a broader social agenda too. As Pinchot noted, "Biltmore was his heart's delight. . . . [But] to his very great credit . . . he had a real sense of social responsibility, and was eager to do more than merely live on money."[5]

George's marriage to Edith in 1898 ensured the translation of his good intentions into actions. Carl Schenck, who took over management of the Biltmore forestry from Pinchot, affirmed Edith was a boon to the work of the estate and its wider social repercussions. "Biltmore House had obtained a mistress, and the Biltmore Estate had got a complement of those qualities which George Vanderbilt manifestly lacked." Friendly and down-to-earth, Edith endeared herself to the Biltmore employees and their families, and to the surrounding townspeople and rural residents too. She held parties and square dances for the Biltmore workers, rode horseback to the homes of new mothers delivering baskets of baby gifts, and held legendary Christmas parties for the Biltmore families. Edna Meadows, the daughter of a Biltmore blacksmith, relished her memories of being transported to the Biltmore house by wagon, eating cake and ice cream in the huge formal dining room, and selecting a special gift from the massive Christmas tree in the sunken garden.[6]

As mistress of the estate Edith was expected to play Lady Bountiful, and she embraced that role graciously. Katharine Reynolds did the same albeit on a more modest scale in Winston-Salem, first in her sprawling Victorian home downtown, and then on her country estate, Reynolda. Like Edith, Katharine

gave lavish checks and thoughtful presents to her staff and employees on birthdays and holidays, and both relished pageantry and revelry, whether Edith was launching a grand flower festival and parade at Biltmore, or Katharine was directing a special performance of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* that engaged dozens of local children as actors. But both women looked beyond their role as patrons and spectacle makers. Edna Meadows, who had become best friends with the young Vanderbilt heiress Cornelia during their childhood, observed of Edith, "Mrs. Vanderbilt did a lot for other people. She was always helping someone out. She loved to do for others." This sentiment was equally true of Katharine Reynolds.[7]

Edith Vanderbilt showed a commitment to the people of western North Carolina early in her marriage. The Vanderbilts had begun constructing Biltmore Village in 1900. Likened by visitors to a feudal hamlet, it contained All Soul's Episcopal Church, a hospital, workshops, and homes.[8] Charlotte L. Yale and Eleanor Vance, Moody Bible College–trained missionaries from New York, taught local boys wood handicrafts at All Soul's with the support of the new church rector. Edith was intrigued by this fledgling program, urging the women directors to include girls too and to train them in needlecraft. Traveling through the Blue Ridge Mountains in search of mountain handicrafts to give as gifts, she had discovered for herself not only the vanishing of old folkways but also the poverty many rural people endured. These new understandings fueled her commitment to the All Soul's program. Using her own funds, she turned it into a school for handicrafts called Biltmore Estate Industries and charged Yale and Vance with promoting craft practices across the Southern Highlands, even sending them to the British Isles to study traditional wool industry and craft production. As the school's reputation spread, so did the demand for its homespun cloth, along with the recognition Edith earned for providing wage work and skill training for men and women alike. Heralded for its commitment to mountain people, Biltmore Estate Industries benefited from a constant stream of tourists demanding local furniture and homespun as souvenirs of "authentic mountain culture."[9]

Katharine Reynolds also inaugurated reforms that improved the lives of working people. Just as Edith stepped into the church-based community program in Biltmore Village to broaden its mission and impact, Katharine looked to her husband's own company to help wage-earning men and women. Like Edith, Katharine developed programs that benefited workers regardless of gender but had a special interest in promoting women's interests. R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company employed black and white working-class men and women in race- and gender-segregated factory jobs. Tobacco factories were rough,

dirty, even dangerous places, with few amenities, and the Reynolds Tobacco Company was no exception. As the number of white women workers increased to meet growing national demand for Camel cigarettes during World War I, Katharine persuaded her husband that improving working conditions in the factories was a necessity. She convinced Dick to install water fountains for all workers and then insisted the company provide hot lunches, first for white employees in their segregated cafeteria, and then four months later in the black cafeteria too. She secured day care for white women with small children and a safe dormitory for single white women workers new to the city, while encouraging managers to let African American women with children arrive later to work to get their families situated first.[10]

Katharine's reforms grew out of her experience with women's benevolent organizations. More so than Edith, Katharine joined, participated in, and was an officer in many local women's clubs and associations, including the local Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) chapter, where she was a founding member and president. The Winston YWCA, chartered in 1908, met rural white girls at the train station, recommended safe boarding homes to them, and offered classes in Bible study, physical education, stenography, typing, and domestic science. It also supported clubs for white working-class girls in local factories (six such clubs existed at Reynolds Tobacco alone) and had sponsored a Colored chapter by 1915. Katharine's sustained role in the local YWCA over its first decade kept her abreast of local, state, and national social reforms, cultivated her already considerable leadership and organizational skills, and afforded her a special role in the Reynolds Company, while enhancing her husband's public identity as a benevolent paternalist committed to the welfare of the city's working people. Not inconsequentially, her actions benefited her own public identity too.[11] Like so many women of her class, race, and generation, she was active in a number of other reform groups too, some for women only, like the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs, while others were organized by men and women alike, including the local Civic Improvement League (where Katharine took a leadership role in writing the organization's constitution) and the North Carolina Conference for Social Service. So well known was Katharine's reputation as an advocate for progressive causes that Virginia governor Thomas Staples Martin (1847–1919) invited her to meet with the governors he had assembled from across the South to discuss pressing social reforms in 1912.[12]

Highly visible in the community as women philanthropists and progressive reformers, neither Edith nor Katharine could have pursued their public leadership roles without an extensive system of employees engaged in the ac-

tual work of managing their homes and estates. Central to both women's freedom from basic household responsibilities was their extensive domestic help. Edith's enormous home was staffed by fifteen to twenty servants; Katharine's more modest but still expansive domicile was staffed by eight to twelve. At both estates, household workers comprised about half white and half African American staff members. Edith and Katharine had high expectations for their help. Katharine frequently procured white and black staff through an agency in Baltimore and tended to hire elite, educated African American women locally. Edith actually established a School of Domestic Science in Asheville aimed at teaching young women housekeeping skills, thereby making them more employable not only in her own home but in the surrounding mountain-resort culture.[13]

Although Katharine and Edith had significant household-management responsibilities, their help ensured they had more time than most women to pursue other activities. They used that time to tackle the philanthropic roles they were expected to embrace as the wives of the state's wealthiest men, and to pursue the progressive reforms they themselves were most interested in. The advent of World War I, long acknowledged by historians as a propitious moment in American women's history, created even more opportunities for Edith and Katharine to assume leadership roles and establish greater independence. Women's nascent civic leadership on the home front, especially in the South, took on whole new levels of importance as millions of men entered the military. Prominent women in particular were urged to model the kinds of voluntary contributions that women could make to support the nation and the men at war.[14]

Already experienced in these roles, Katharine and Edith quickly emerged as key leaders within their communities and across the state throughout the war effort. Edith engaged in Red Cross work "and other forms of back-of-the-line soldiering." She reduced her Biltmore staff to support men volunteering for service, and she turned her nationally celebrated landscape gardens into vegetable-producing bounty for hungry families. Katharine pledged to train local farmers' wives and daughters in canning and preserving, as well as in nutritional and hygienic food practices, explaining to the public it was important to "be engaged in food production and food conservation." Governor Thomas W. Bickett appointed Katharine to the North Carolina Library War Council, charged with raising $1 million to provide books for soldiers and sailors, and then secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, a longtime family friend and former North Carolina newspaper editor, appointed her chairwoman of the second North Carolina Liberty Loan drive.[15]

Both women pursued this war work at a particularly difficult time in their lives. George Washington Vanderbilt had died unexpectedly in 1914, deeding his $50 million estate, along with considerable debt, to his wife and daughter.[16] Dick Reynolds died four years later, leaving much of his $10 million estate to his wife and their four children. Edith and Katharine not only found themselves coping with their personal grief but juggling multiple legal and economic realities, on top of ongoing public expectations that intensified during wartime.[17] Their sudden status as widows along with the changing gendered expectations of World War I thrust both these women into new pursuits that challenged older conceptions about women's social roles. Edith emerged from this journey a beloved public figure in North Carolina and became increasingly engaged in political reform. Not only did Katharine take on new public roles too, she also freed herself to pursue her personal welfare, challenging conventional boundaries for southern women's conduct in the process.

Edith's first public challenge as a widow lay in handling her financial situation. Unlike Katharine Reynolds, who had learned not only to manage her own wages as a working girl but to invest in stocks and make considerable amounts of money throughout her married adulthood, all in her own name, Edith had not managed or invested money before her husband's death. George's inheritance had never been as enormous as rumored, amounting to as little as $10 million and as much as half of it in trust, and the costs of creating Biltmore had been high, estimated at $87 million. In 1907 Carl Schenck had been dumbfounded to learn that the Vanderbilts could no longer afford to support his trailblazing forestry program. Although George had offered to sell the Pisgah Forest to the federal government to raise funds, no agreement existed at the time of his death. It took Edith's intervention to arrange a sale to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1917, doing so at some loss to herself. Rather than sell off the land to multiple timber companies who would have paid top dollar, she offered the land to the forestry commission at five dollars an acre, a lower price than her husband's proposal years earlier, and the government accepted. While Schenck rightly observed that Edith had been truly generous given her reduced circumstances, to Edith, it had been a win-win. She no longer had to bear the expense of the land, and she had ensured its conservation.[18]

The sale had not solved her financial problems however, though she had already begun to turn herself into a savvy entrepreneur, weighing advice from lawyers, bankers, and developers eager to advise her. She elected to sell Biltmore Village and found financial partners with whom to turn a parcel of desirable Biltmore land into an exclusive residential housing development and country club. She then sold Biltmore Estate Industries to Fred Seely, former editor of

the *Georgian* newspaper in Atlanta, and son-in-law to E. W. Grove, the founder of the four-year-old nearby Grove Park Inn. Although Seely and Vanderbilt informed the public that she lacked the time to expand the enterprise to meet escalating demand given her home-front obligations, financial exigency remained her most pressing concern.[19]

The people of Asheville and Biltmore Estate did not hold Edith's actions against her—the love she had for her adopted North Carolina mountains and its people had become legendary. During the summer of 1916 devastating storms had flooded rivers across the region, killing an estimated eighty people and causing at least $22 million in damages. As the rain-swollen Swannanoa River, cresting twenty-one feet above normal, spilled raging waters into Biltmore Village, entire families clung to trees for hours on end awaiting help. Edith and her daughter Cornelia waded into the water alongside brawny men to help pull limp survivors to safety.[20] Edith's rescue efforts underscored the long list of good deeds she had pursued on behalf of Ashevillians. Despite her husband's death, and amid fears she would return to the high society of the Northeast, Edith continued to support local reform efforts (and was also quick to offer Biltmore for staging public events). She supported, for example, Elizabeth Morris and Della Day's community literacy program for adults, known as the "Moonlight Schools," that enabled working adults to take classes at night.[21] She sustained the same reform interests her husband had supported before his death, including maintenance of the Biltmore Hospital, and she ensured construction of a new building to meet expanding need. She also assisted the black chapter of the Asheville YWCA, which had gotten off the ground (under a different name) years earlier with help from George Vanderbilt, with the express purpose of reducing tensions between the races.[22]

Meanwhile, Katharine's need to nurse her terminally ill husband almost round the clock during the last nine months of his life while remaining active in local and state public life, especially the time-consuming promotion of Liberty Bonds, proved too difficult, forcing her to resign her state chairman post. As her husband lay dying, Katharine quietly nurtured perhaps her truest expression of her progressive vision—her Reynolda Estate. In building Reynolda, she had incorporated into the estate plan her own dreams for a model social world, blending country-life ideals, progressive reform impulses, and historical tropes into her version of "the good life" after visiting the estates of many wealthy Mid-Atlantic industrialists, as well as Biltmore.[23]

Like Biltmore, Katharine's thousand-acre property modeled an English manor estate. Also like Biltmore, Reynolda had its own village that supported services for her home and farm (a blacksmith shop, a heating plant, a laundry,

and residences for farm managers and domestics) as well as key social institutions (a Presbyterian Church, a post office, white and black public schools, and housing for the reverend and his family and the schoolteachers). Again like Biltmore, Reynolda boasted the latest domestic technologies—running water, indoor plumbing, and steam heat—and reflected Jim Crow realities. Although Katharine housed her favorite black domestic servants in her state-of-the-art village, her black farmhands and their families resided a half mile distant in a set of small cottages known as "Five Row." Here residents made do with fireplaces, oil lamps, outhouses, and a single pipe delivering water to an outside pump for the whole community, although homes were enclosed by picturesque fences and residents were given flower and vegetable seeds and had their gardens plowed.[24]

Reynolda and Biltmore Estates proved unique by the end of World War I not only because they were now run by two of North Carolina's most prominent and newly single society women but because of their mistresses' dedication to reform and improvement that undergirded them. Katharine and Edith shared in their desire to promote progressive agricultural practices that raised the quality of life for rural people, and tried to model those practices on their own properties. They advocated upgrading livestock through better, more selective breeding practices, and the planting of high-yielding fruits and vegetables full of nutrients. This shared commitment was not as surprising for the era as was their engagement in it as elite southern women. Both Katharine and Edith had come of age during a period in which the swift encroachment of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration helped spawn a populist political movement and unleashed a cultural nostalgia for rural life—even as country people, white and black, fled the poverty of the countryside in search of wage labor and an improved standard of living.

President Theodore Roosevelt, fearful that the flight of farmers to cities could undermine the agrarian republic, created the Country Life Commission in 1908 with the aid of Gifford Pinchot, the original head of forestry at Biltmore. Social scientists organized conferences and conducted surveys on the economic challenges farmers faced. These country-life reformers, although hesitant to promote government programs outright, identified themselves as part of the larger progressive movement of the era. Unfortunately, they proved too diverse and too divided over how best to balance rural values and progressive improvements to make any real changes in rural America. They also ignored the plight of black farm families, despite entreaties by distinguished black leader W. E. B. Du Bois, who wrote Country Life Commission chair Liberty Hyde Bailey on this very omission in 1908.[25]

In what was an ostensibly whites-only commitment, country-lifers pursued many avenues on behalf of their cause, from supporting country schools and country churches as places to encourage reform, to advocating rural postal delivery and good roads, the spread of both being hastened by the Federal Highway Act of 1916. Both Katharine and Edith embraced this country-life movement. Katharine organized her Reynolda Presbyterian Church to meet rural needs, going door-to-door to invite local farmers to join her church membership and establishing a Sunday school. Edith became a public spokeswoman for North Carolina's "good roads" movement and was even profiled in this role by the *American Motorist*, a national magazine. What makes Katharine and Edith's involvement in the country-life movement especially intriguing is their feminization of it. The rural world, a white male stronghold of American productivity and citizenship, had been weakened by industrialization's transforming impact. It had become acceptable, in light of escalating rural poverty, for elite women like Edith and Katharine to step in as leaders to help rescue this once proud nation of manly farmers.

Beyond their country-life commitments on their own estates, nowhere was Edith and Katharine's leadership on agricultural change more evident than in North Carolina's agricultural reform movement after World War I. Katharine was appointed to the Executive Committee of the North Carolina Agricultural Society (1918–21), while Edith served as president (1921–24).[26] Edith presided over six other officers, all men, including the famous North Carolina journalist and naval secretary Josephus Daniels. Governor Cameron Morrison also appointed Edith to a four-year term as a board member of the North Carolina Board of Agriculture (1921–25), once again the only woman.[27]

The North Carolina State Agricultural Society was a venerable organization charged with running the annual North Carolina State Fair. Founded in 1818 the society had built a fairground east of the Capitol in 1853, and by 1900 as many as fifty thousand people attended the much-heralded social event of the year. The society, committed to the welfare of all North Carolinians and enduring optimism about the state's future, had a long tradition of leadership from among the ranks of the most powerful men in the state.[28] State and local leaders and agricultural reformers alike used the state fair to promote the latest technologies and scientific methods, while state and local newspapers along with regional agricultural journals urged all North Carolinians to attend out of self-interest. The society used the lure of premiums to encourage the best farmers to exhibit their top livestock and produce and to showcase their excellence and how they achieved it.

In 1917, in keeping with North Carolina women's increasing public commit-

ment at the height of the war effort, and in recognition that women's contributions to farm life were considerable, the society inaugurated a "Woman's Building" on the fairgrounds, with an invocation by Sallie Cotten (the founder of the North Carolina Woman's Clubs), a series of addresses by prominent women's club leaders, and an address by Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the first woman member of Congress.[29]

Although this commitment marked a significant step forward for women's visibility and support, as did Edith Vanderbilt's election as the first woman president of the Agricultural Society, the fair was in fact under siege, and male leaders must have been eager for the kind of personal and financial resources women leaders could bring to bear on their august institution. The fair was an expensive undertaking and was growing more expensive with each passing year. The fair highlighted, in close collaboration with the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now North Carolina State University) and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, an array of exhibits ranging from the latest horse-drawn implements to motorized farm machinery and encouraged leading agriculturalists and dealers to attend, all out of a deep commitment to agricultural reform. Yet the fair had evolved into a venue for entertainment and spectacle too, replete with a midway filled with food concessions, rides, and human and animal acts, as well as a grandstand for circus performances and horse and car races. Managing and funding this grassroots educational opportunity turned entertainment and commercial extravaganza had become daunting. No wonder that the leading male politicians of the state invited Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Reynolds, with their seemingly bottomless pocketbooks, impressive reform networks, and proven leadership capabilities, into their fold.[30] The North Carolina State Fair had always reified country living. As women leaders of this agricultural improvement movement who had already demonstrated their personal commitment to improving rural people's lives on their own estates and in their own communities, Edith and Katharine brought a popular social-uplift message to the whole enterprise as well.[31]

It was Edith though, in her new role as first woman president of the Society, who emerged as masterful, accomplishing "what any number of men have failed to do," by putting the fair on sound financial footing. She had also earned the hearts of the people in the process, especially in the wake of the push back she had received upon her appointment. The North Carolina General Assembly had always passed a pro forma resolution inviting the incoming society president to speak to the joint session. Following Edith's selection, however, debate broke out on the House floor. Many of the state representatives disapproved of a woman's addressing the all-male assembly, a first for that body. Although

the invitation to invite Edith passed twenty-five to fifteen, a second resolution was proposed, requesting the outgoing Agricultural Society president, General Julian S. Carr, speak too, in effect diluting the impact of a woman's addressing the assembly on her own. This second resolution also passed.[32]

On the morning of Edith's noon speech, huge crowds gathered in the hallways and galleries in anticipation of her arrival. Rounds of applause preceded her appearance on the dais when she joined Governor Morrison and General Carr, in the end assigned only the duty of introducing her. Wearing homespun trimmed in fur from Biltmore Industries, Edith won over her audience by telling them she did not know much about public speaking but thought "a woman's speech should be like a skirt, long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to get attention." The crowd roared with laughter, and listened as she intoned to the women in the mixed audience that "this is a day when women have come into their own. And each one of us must shoulder her responsibilities along with the men, and try to fulfill her duty to her community, state and country." Pledging her deep commitment to the welfare of North Carolina, her belief in both the integrity of its people and the opportunity available to advance the causes of the state fair, and her support for the governor's "Good Roads" program (which she felt went hand in glove with greater expectations for agricultural production and "a higher plane of rural life"), she thanked the assembly "in the name of her fellow sisters" for inviting her to speak. The *Raleigh News and Observer* praised her courage at speaking before two hundred men and stated this boded well for her leadership of the Agricultural Society. Her speech, the paper concluded, had been more anticipated and better received than "any recent gubernatorial addresses, or the utterances of sundry other dignitaries who have addressed this distinguished body of lawmakers."[33]

With the people of the state behind her, Edith took charge of her presidency by pressing the General Assembly for more funds and promising additional buildings, better exhibits, and larger crowds in return. Her initiative was championed. "It is no undue tribute to the President of the Agricultural Society to say that she has given to the annual harvest celebration in the capital a significance it has never held before." Despite some assemblymen's misgivings about her sex, "Mrs. Vanderbilt has given time, energy, contagious enthusiasm," observed another journalist, "and men have found pleasure in helping her see her ambitions for North Carolina realized."[34] Several years after her assembly address, Edith unveiled a complex agricultural improvement plan that began with the creation of a feeder system linking local boys' and girls' clubs to county fairs, and county fairs to the state fair, to reach out to rural youths. Meanwhile, she traveled back and forth across North Carolina by car giving speeches on the value of develop-

ing county fairs as educational institutions. She advocated building more public schools next to the newest roads to ensure students could get to them, and to ensure the schools could connect to the broader world. By 1923 her activities were drawing national attention to North Carolina's rural challenges.[35]

Katharine Reynolds, although she remained an advocate for agricultural reform, never quite achieved Edith's public prominence. After R. J. Reynolds died in 1918, she continued her work on her model farm, opening public schools for white and black children alike. She continued to pursue multiple local reforms. In a significant act of directed philanthropy she donated land for a state-of-the-art public high school for the city of Winston-Salem and built a public auditorium alongside it, both bearing R. J. Reynolds's name. Katharine also remarried. Although both Edith and Katharine would create whole new lives for themselves by marrying a second time, Katharine's second marriage was especially telling in that it signaled her desire for personal fulfillment, not just an influential public role.

By 1919 she had fallen deeply in love with her new school principal, J. Edward Johnston, a handsome World War I veteran twelve years her junior. Their love affair, at first clandestine, was a passionate one. The two married in 1921, despite private and public disapproval. Not only was Edward younger than Katharine, but he was virtually penniless too. Katharine, in explaining her decision to marry Edward to her parents, stated simply that she had lived her life up to that point dedicated to the welfare of others. It was time, she concluded, to pursue her own happiness. Upon their marriage, Katharine did not forsake her reform commitments, and her interest in furthering a stronger relationship between religious values and secular life only deepened, leading to her inviting the accomplished Presbyterian minister Reverend D. Clay Lilly to trade his large urban pastorate in Louisville for her tiny Reynolda Church. In exchange, she promised to launch an ambitious religious education program for rural children from Reynolda and to let him organize a national public conference debating religious issues of the time, later heralded as the noteworthy Reynolda Conferences.[36]

Meanwhile, Edith's interest in politics had deepened. She hosted New York governor Al Smith at Biltmore and was publicly photographed endorsing him.[37] She served on the board of directors and was subsequently elected head of the Carolina Motor Club. She was also elected vice president of Western North Carolina, Incorporated.[38] When daughter Cornelia married a dashing English diplomat named John Cecil in 1925, Edith turned over Biltmore to the young couple. She sublimated her own political ambitions by marrying Rhode Island senator Peter G. Gerry two years later.[39] As a senator's wife, however, she had

far more political influence than most women. Not only did she quickly emerge as a well-regarded Washington hostess, but she was named president of the Congressional Club, a special association for the wives of Congress members—which was no mean feat, for she was the wife of a Democrat in a Republican-majority Congress.[40]

Although Katharine's and Edith's lives were not identical, their trajectories as elite women and their influence on North Carolina's progressive era reforms were strikingly similar. It is difficult to determine the exact nature of their relationship, but they visited each other's homes on multiple occasions and socialized together at elite events like charity balls and horse shows. Edith and Katharine shared close family friends in the Bernards from Asheville. Ben Bernard, who became Katharine's personal secretary, in fact urged Katharine and second husband Ed to stay in Edith's New York apartment during her absence one winter. Daughters Cornelia Vanderbilt and Nancy Reynolds, both of whom had lost their fathers as girls, shopped, attended plays, and visited each other as teenagers in both Manhattan and North Carolina. Katharine and Edith must have had plentiful opportunities to discuss their ideas about agricultural reform and social progress together; in fact, the two may have been even closer than the fragmentary documentary record suggests.[41]

Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Reynolds contributed significantly to the changing landscape of white women's public place in North Carolina, and by extension in southern society generally. Their fame and fortune ensured their actions were well documented. Their actions conveyed a commitment to furthering the public good through progressive reforms, and especially through agricultural improvement. If their causes were not radical enough to unleash social transformation, their visibility as women leaders and philanthropists helped expand white women's boundaries. Twice widowed, Edith died in Rhode Island in 1958. The *Asheville Citizen* perhaps best captured her North Carolina legacy by calling her "the outstanding woman in North Carolina today . . . who although a Tar Heel by adoption has proved so active in her loyalty and support of this State, as to set an example to other North Carolina women in public affairs."[42] Katharine died from an embolism in 1924 at the age of forty-three just days after giving birth to a son with her second husband. The city of Winston-Salem—stores, offices, and schools—all closed down to publicly mourn their loss, and thousands lined the streets as her funeral cortege passed en route to Salem Cemetery. "She was a woman of wide vision," said the Moravian Reverend Pfohl at her public service attended by hundreds in the R. J. Reynolds Auditorium she had built in memory of her first husband. She was "a woman for the new day," he concluded.[43] One can only wonder what else she might have accomplished had she lived into old age.

Edith Vanderbilt and Katharine Reynolds, as the wives of two of North Carolina's wealthiest men, used their unique status to develop compelling public identities over the course of their adult lives. The relative independence of each of these women, by virtue of their resources and their marriages, and also by virtue of their widowhood and the opportunities created by World War I, enabled them not only to create their public selves—a rarity for southern women of any social class during this era—but helped legitimize women's influence and authority in public roles across early twentieth-century North Carolina. In many respects, Katharine and Edith became the modern exemplars of North Carolina's true womanhood. Although both women could have easily adopted the role of pleasure-seeking, socialite wife, each chose to engage in the life of their local community and their state instead, and their efforts brought increasing viability to women's leadership as well as much-needed reforms.

NOTES

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1. On the Vanderbilts, see Louis Auchincloss, *The Vanderbilt Era: Profiles of a Gilded Age* (New York: Scribner, 1989); and Howard E. Covington, *Lady on a Hill: How Biltmore Became an American Icon* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley, 2006), chap. 2. See also Frank Sullivan, "The Vanderbilt Convention," in E. B. and Katharine S. White, eds., *A Subtreasury of American Humor* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1941), 411–12, for an amusing glimpse of the Vanderbilts in the mid-twentieth-century American imagination. On Edith Dresser Vanderbilt's inclusion in the Social Register, see *Social Register, New York* (New York: Social Register Association, 1901), 509. On the Reynoldses, see Margaret Supplee Smith, "Reynolda: A Rural Vision in an Industrializing South," *North Carolina Historical Review* 65 (July 1988): 310–12; Catherine Howett, *A World of Her Own Making: Katharine Smith Reynolds and the Landscape of Reynolda* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); and Michele Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds: Partners of Fortune in the Making of the New South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

2. Covington, *Lady on a Hill*, 23, 31, 37–54.

3. Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds*, chap. 2.

4. Ibid., chaps. 2 and 4.

5. Covington, *Lady on a Hill*, chaps. 2 and 3; "Vanderbilt Dies from Operation," March 6, 1914, Edith Vanderbilt Newspaper Clipping File, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.; Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), 381; Quoted in Hermione Lee, *Edith Wharton* (New York: Random House, 2007), 48, 122; Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 48; Carl Schenck, *The Birth of Forestry in America: Biltmore Forestry School, 1898–1913* (repr., n.p.: Forest History Society, 1974), 79.

6. Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 48; Schenck, *The Birth of Forestry in America*, 79; "Fond Memories of the Vanderbilts," Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.

7. "Fond Memories of the Vanderbilts," and "Great Deal of Good Done Here by Vanderbilts,"

April 30, 1924, Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.; Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds*, chap. 5.

8. Clive Aslet, *The American Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 14.

9. "Great Deal of Good Done Here by Vanderbilts," undated clipping [1924], Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.; Bruce Johnson, "Eleanor Vance, Charlotte Yale and the Origins of Biltmore Estate Industries," *May We All Remember Well: A Journal of the History and Cultures of Western North Carolina* 2 (2001): 241–66; Brendan C. Martin, *Tourism in the Mountain Sky: A Double-Edged Sword* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 57–58; Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 153; Yance and Yale Correspondence with Fred Seely Folder, box 1, Biltmore Industries Archives, Grovewood Gallery, Asheville, N.C. Most of the Vance and Yale letters are available online in a virtual archive through a cooperative agreement between the University of North Carolina–Asheville and Grovewood Gallery at http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/mss/biltmore_industries/default_biltmore_industries_archive.html (accessed May 20, 2013). See also Lida Rose McCabe, "Regenerating Handicrafts in the Carolinas," *Art World*, November 1917, 159–61. Biltmore Homespun developed a national market, and even clothed several first ladies, including Herbert Hoover's wife, Lou Henry Hoover, and Eleanor Roosevelt. See "U.S. Presidents' Folder," box 1, Biltmore Industries Archives.

10. "Lunch Room for Colored Hands," *Winston-Salem Journal* (hereafter *WSJ*), July 30, 1915; on Katharine's other reforms, see newspaper coverage in the *WSJ*, on February 16, March 28, April 1, September 10, 1916, November 16, 1919, and the *Union Republican*, Oct. 19, 1916; Nannie M. Tilley, *The R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company*, 252, 267–74.

11. "Industrial Work for Girls of the City," *WSJ*, September 5, 1917; Tilley, *R. J. Reynolds*, 273–74.

12. "Segregation of the Races," *WSJ*, September 5, 1913; Photograph of Katharine Smith Reynolds and North Carolina Federated Women's Club Officers, No. 006-396-01, Archives, Reynolda House Museum of American Art (hereafter RHMAA); M. Brown Lathem to Katharine Smith Reynolds (hereafter KSR), Dec. 3, [1912], Reynolda Family Papers (hereafter RFP): box 3, File 122, Archives, RHMAA; "Constitution and By-Laws," *Twin-City Sentinel*, January 13, 1913; Gertrude Sprague Carraway, *Carolina Crusaders: History of North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs* (n.p.: Owen G. Dunn, 1941), 13; Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 80–127.

13. On Katharine's relationship with her domestic servants and the conditions of their working lives, see Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds*, chap. 6; on the household staff at Biltmore, see the interview with former Biltmore-trained domestic Annie Mae Nipson in Ruth Edmonds Hill, ed., *The Black Women Oral History Project*, vol. 8, from The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College (Westport, Conn.: Meckler, 1991), 205–17. On the school itself, see Bill Alexander, *Around Biltmore Village* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2008), 58.

14. Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 21–35.

15. "Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt Is Leader among Women of State; Interested in Public Affairs," Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.; "Reynolda Farm: Splendid Country Estate of Mrs. R. J. Reynolds, Its Origins, Development, and the Aims of Its Owner," *Twin-City Sentinel*, July 7, 1917. Katharine clearly was invested in the project. She had acquired literature on Girls' Demonstration Work and

canning clubs from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (see materials in RFP, box 2, file 164, RHMAA; Josephus Daniels to KSR, May 7, 1917, RFP; box 2, file 167, RHMAA).

16. "Vanderbilt Dies from Operation," March 6, 1914, *Asheville Citizen*, Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.

17. R. J. Reynolds Obituary, *Charlotte News and Observer*, July 29 and 30, 1918; and *Wilmington Dispatch*, July 29, 1918, clippings, R. J. Reynolds in Memoriam Book, Archives, RHMAA.

18. On Katharine Reynolds's management of her wages and stocks, see Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds*, chaps. 4 and 7; on the fiscal challenges Edith Vanderbilt faced and how she handled them, see Aslet, *The American Country House*, 16–17; and Schenk, *The Birth of Forestry*, 155, 203–9.

19. Interview with Mr. Jerry Ball, archivist, July 27, 2011, Biltmore Industries Archives; Aslet, *The American Country House*, 16–17; Alexander, *Around Biltmore Village*, 114–15, 119; McCabe, "Regenerating Handicrafts in the Carolina," 159–61; Johnson, "To Serve Unnoticed and Work Unseen," 259–63; "George C. Arthur Now Manages Vanderbilts' Native Crafts of Weaving and Wood Carving," Edith Biltmore Clipping File; Charlotte Yale to Mrs. Fred Seely File, November 24, 1921, box 1; Fred Seely to Miss Vance and Miss Yale, September 29, 1920; Edith Vanderbilt Homespun Orders, April 14, 1921, and July 28, 1922, Advertising, 1920–1925 File, box 1; Biltmore Industries File, box 5; U.S. Presidents' File, Box 1; all in Biltmore Industries Archives, Asheville, N.C.

20. Southern Railway Company Report, 1917, 11–12; "Mrs. Vanderbilt's Help Substantial," *Asheville Times*, undated but most probably July 17 or 18, 1916, Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.

21. Virginia Terrell, "Never Too Old to Learn ABC's in This School," May, 8, 1924. See also "In Adult Schools, Students Gather on Biltmore Estate"; "Director Explains Cost to Stamp Out Adult Illiteracy"; and "Community Schools Give Annual Contest and Award Many Prizes," all undated newspaper clippings in Della Day Scrapbook, Night Schools Collection, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C. Della Day's scrapbook contains dozens of moving handwritten letters from night school pupils thanking Mrs. Day for their education and explaining its great personal value to them.

22. Alexander, *Around Biltmore Village*, 45–46, 58, 62, 98; "Mrs. Gerry Dies at Home in Providence," December 22, 1958, *Asheville Citizen*, Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.

23. Katharine purchased plants from the Biltmore nurseries to landscape her own estate. KSR to Louis L. Miller, head landscape designer for the James B. Duke Estate, Somerville, N.J., Jan. 2, 1913, box 2, file 125, RFP, RHMAA. See also Louis L. Miller to KSR, January 9 and 10, 1913, box 2, file 125, RFP, RHMAA.

24. Gillespie, *Katharine and R. J. Reynolds*, chap. 6.

25. Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865–1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 51–55; William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900–1920* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974), 132; Douglas R. Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 272–75; W. E. B. Du Bois to Liberty Hyde Bailey, November 23, 1908, Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Cornell University Library, online exhibit of documents, http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/bailey/commission/commission_3.html (accessed May 20, 2013).

26. "Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt Is Leader among Women of State," Edith Vanderbilt Clipping File, Newspaper File Collection Biographies, vol. 69, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, N.C.; on Katharine's service on the State Fair Committee see C. Horne Prest, president of the State Fair Committee, to KSR, Aug. 12, 1918; KSR to J. Edward Johnston, Jan. 29, 1921; Notice of Meeting of Ex-

ecutive Committee of the N.C. State Fair in Raleigh, Feb. 3, 1921 (which followed Edith Vanderbilt's speech to the Assembly), in KSR Correspondence, RFP, RHMAA.

27. Appointments, 1921–1925, in D. L. Corbitt, ed., *Public Papers and Letters of Cameron Morrison, Governor of North Carolina, 1921–1925* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Co. State Printers, 1927), 327.

28. Melton A. McLaurin, "The Nineteenth-Century North Carolina State Fair as a Social Institution," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 59 (July 1982): 213–29; and "The History of the State Fair," North Carolina Museum of History, Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2005, 1–3; "To the Ladies," *WSJ*, September 4, 1900.

29. Program, North Carolina Agricultural Society Dedication of the New Woman's Building, October 17, 1917, box 2, file 136, RFP, RHMAA.

30. McLaurin, "The Nineteenth-Century North Carolina State Fair," 213–29.

31. "Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Reynolds Leave for the State Fair," *WSJ*, October 17, 1905; their return was documented in the *WSJ* on October 20, 1905.

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Arizona Nick Swaney Blankenship

Becoming Cherokee

SARAH H. HILL

The life of Arizona Nick Swaney Blankenship is a tapestry woven of many threads. Granddaughter of a Cherokee-black marriage and daughter of a Cherokee-white union, she grew up on the Cherokee reservation in western North Carolina, attended a predominantly black school in Virginia, worked for elite white families in New England, taught impoverished black children in South Carolina, and returned to the reservation to marry a white man several years her junior. In her lifetime she transcended North Carolina's oppressive racial practices that restricted the lives of Native as well as of African Americans. She prevailed over the abusive interventions of the federal government that tried to erase Native cultures. She endured the initiatives of a nationwide reform movement to transform Native people. Arizona's story reveals the fragile world of North Carolina Cherokees, who were subject to social restrictions, federal imperatives, and domineering intervention. At the same time, her story illuminates America's continuing preoccupation with racial identity and cultural difference. Arizona's personal strengths crossed over and under the politics of race and the limitations of place, weaving a life lived fully within the confines of a narrow frame. Her successful navigation of contradictory and changing initiatives is her story of becoming Cherokee.

Arizona's African American heritage and Native American identity left her subject to scientific assumptions and legal restrictions. She was born in an era when the meaning of race was a topic of considerable debate and in a place where the concept of race justified discriminatory practices. Nineteenth-century arguments about race went well beyond the halls of education and the pages of scientific journals to inform public discussion and shape social policy. Seeking to explain human variation, scientists heatedly debated the reasons for biological and cultural differences. Charles Darwin's 1871 publication *The*

ARIZONA NICK SWANEY BLANKENSHIP

Courtesy of Hampton University Archives.

Descent of Man asserted that similarities among races proved their single, common ancestry. To Darwin and his followers, no physical or mental attributes were sufficiently distinctive to separate humans into racial categories.[1] Instead, Darwin's adherents used the word "race" as a collective term for stages of cultural development. Their hierarchical models included "savage races" as well as "barbaric races" that could progress to the level of "civilized races." Moreover, "civilized races" could decline to stages of barbarism or savagery since none of the conditions were inherited or inevitable. The Darwinian models and language shaped the reform movement that so greatly influenced Arizona's life.

Darwin's dissenters, such as Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz, differed entirely. They proposed multiple origins for human races, classified nonwhites as separate species, and argued for their innate inferiority.[2] Their models subsumed biology, culture, origins, and ethnicity into the single category of race. Such theories infused social doctrines of racial inequality and justified the oppression of nonwhites. Agassiz and others went beyond classification of species to assert that interracial marriage produced increasingly degenerate individuals. "It is sound policy," Agassiz wrote to a physician, "to put every possible obstacle to the crossing of the races and the increase of half breeds." Considering racial intermarriage "unnatural" as well as "immoral," he deplored a future in which America might "be inhabited by the effeminate progeny of mixed races, half Indian, half negro, sprinkled with white blood."[3] While Darwinian models created Arizona's opportunities, the language and discriminatory doctrines that emerged from race science threatened to erase them through public policies and laws.

By 1880 a dubious discipline had emerged to validate obstacles to interracial marriage. The worldwide movement called eugenics, meaning "good generation," aimed to control human breeding by encouraging reproduction among some groups but sterilizing members of other groups, beginning with alcoholics, asylum inmates, and the physically and mentally disabled. North Carolina's miscegenation laws that increased during Arizona's lifetime, and the state's eugenics practices that were in place by the time she died, testify to the nineteenth-century link forged between scientific theories and social doctrines.[4] All Native Americans were susceptible to rising discrimination based on racial science, and none more so than Arizona. In the eyes of degeneracy theorists, her birth and the union of her parents as well as her own marriage actually threatened the white race.

Assigning racial identity was common in nineteenth-century America. As the federal government began preparing for the 1870 census, its agents issued significant directives to the enumerators. So it was that Alfred Zachary

of Cashiers, North Carolina, received a booklet explaining his responsibilities. On page ten he found the category called "Personal Description." The age, sex, and color of the person "must be noted," he read, and then again "the column for color is always to be filled." The five options for "color" were White, Black, Mulatto, Chinese, and Indian.[5] Exposing the confusion inherent in racial classification, the instructions merged biology, ethnicity, and national origin into a single misnamed category.

On July 29, 1870, Zachary completed his census of "Whites and Negroes" in the Qualla Town section of Jackson County. He had enumerated 173 households, only 3 of which were headed by African Americans. But Zachary's category of "Whites and Negroes" did not account for every head of household, for he also listed forty-year-old Woodfin Nick, identified as a farmer. In the two columns following Nick's name, Zachary entered the age and sex. Next he selected the last of his options for "color" and wrote in the standard abbreviation for Indian. Woodfin Nick was the only Indian among the "Whites and Negroes" who headed Qualla Town households. Separating him from his neighbors and drawing attention to his "color," a horizontal line in pencil crossed the page just above his name.[6]

Nick's "color" was not all that set his household apart, for his family members were also distinctive. Zachary identified Nick's wife, Lucy, and their eight children as black. Just below the youngest child's name another horizontal pencil line completed the bracketing of the family. Set apart on the census roll, the Nicks were the only racially mixed family among the Qualla Town "Whites and Negroes."[7]

The Qualla Town census also included 120 households headed by Cherokee Indians, divided from their white and black neighbors with a fresh set of pages and numbers. In these pages no Cherokee household included members designated as black. The Nick family was unique among Indian households as well as those of whites and blacks. No other Qualla Town family consisted of a Cherokee father and an African American mother and children.[8]

The census records of the next decade revealed America's increasing preoccupation with racial heritage. On the 1880 forms, the importance of "color" had risen to become the first attribute listed, appearing immediately after the individual's name and before either age or sex. The federal government instructed enumerators to use particular care in reporting "mulatto," defined as "all persons having any trace of African blood." Emphasizing the importance of identifying those with "African blood," the instructions asserted "important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this class."[9] The assertion evoked the dual trends emerging in America, the practice of racial dis-

crimination known as Jim Crow and the social discrimination inherent in the so-called science of eugenic studies.

The 1880 enumerator found few members remaining from the earlier Nick household. Woodfin, Lucy, and six of their eight children did not appear at all in the Qualla Town census, having either died or moved away. The head of the 1880 Nick household was Lucy and Woodfin's oldest son, John, a twenty-five-year-old unmarried farmer. His sister, Laura, age twenty-two, and her two young children, five-year-old Arizona and two-year-old Lorenzo, shared John Nick's household. Along with the changed household configuration, another significant difference appeared. Classified as black in 1870, John Nick and his sister Laura were identified as Indian in 1880. Laura's children Arizona and Lorenzo were also named as Indian, with no reference to African American ancestry.[10]

As their black designation disappeared, another racial identity emerged in the household. The Nick home included a white farm laborer from Tennessee named John Swaney. According to subsequent rolls Swaney was the father of Arizona and Lorenzo. The records identified Arizona Nick racially as the child of a Cherokee grandfather, black grandmother, white father, and Cherokee mother. And her own "color" was Cherokee.

The identities assigned and claimed in the census categories grew out of an American and Cherokee history that became increasingly racist. In classifying the Nick children as black, Alfred Zachary perhaps followed the custom of former slaveholding societies that identified children of enslaved women with their mothers in order to perpetuate an economy based on slavery. Lucy Nick would have known the color classifications well. Aged forty-two in the 1870 census, she had lived most of her life under oppressive antebellum race laws.[11]

The identification of children with their mothers had also characterized Cherokee society but without regard to race. Cherokee matrilineal inheritance of identity protected an economic system based on balanced responsibilities. In contrast to the restrictions that oppressed children of enslaved women, descent from a Cherokee mother provided citizenship, opportunities, and relationships.[12] The roots of the Cherokee social order ran deep, perhaps particularly among conservative North Carolina Cherokees. Living in a relatively inaccessible mountain region, they had little intermarriage; few missionaries, schools, or roads; modest acquisition of modern tools; and considerable resistance to federal intrusion.[13] Born in the late 1820s, Woodfin Nick grew up in a matrilineal society. If he maintained Cherokee customs after the 1838 removal, he too would have recognized the Nick children as his wife's descendants rather than his own.

Cherokee matrilineal customs, however, had eroded in the removal era.

Amending traditions, the Cherokee government had affirmed patrilineal inheritance and decreed that children of Cherokee fathers as well as mothers receive citizenship.[14] If the Nicks adhered to the Cherokee Nation's laws rather than prior traditions, their decision to identify as Cherokee conformed to regulations that emerged before removal. Such laws might acknowledge the Nick children as Cherokee, like their father, rather than black, like their mother.

But other customs worked against such recognition. The Cherokee Nation had also developed regulations that pertained directly to children like the Nicks. The 1824 Cherokee Council prohibited intermarriage between Cherokees or whites and "negro slaves." A separate law decreed that "all free negroes coming into the Cherokee Nation" would be "viewed and treated in every respect as intruders." The 1828 Cherokee Constitution granted citizenship to the descendants of Cherokee men "by all free women, except the African race." Following removal, the Cherokee Nation in the West drafted a new constitution with the same racial prohibitions.[15] By those sanctions the Nick children would not have been recognized as Cherokee.

Yet at the time Zachary worked his way through Qualla Town, North Carolina, Cherokees may not have felt bound by Cherokee Nation laws. In 1819 they had agreed to become property owners and state citizens.[16] Shortly before removal, however, they lost their land title and were accepted back into the Cherokee Nation. With North Carolina citizenship in doubt, most were forced to emigrate with the rest of the Nation. Those who avoided removal remained in the mountains, coalescing in the area of Qualla Town to become the Eastern Band of Cherokees. In subsequent debates over removal-treaty money, their Cherokee Nation citizenship also became tenuous. With the majority of the Nation some nine hundred miles away, the influence of their laws on the Eastern Band was uncertain. The Eastern Band may or may not have acknowledged children like the Nicks as Cherokee.

In 1870 the Eastern Band had no established marriage laws. Its first constitution in 1872 made no reference to race, color, miscegenation, or inheritance.[17] Perhaps the union of Woodfin and Lucy Nick attracted little interest among Cherokees, but the Eastern Band was not immune to the currents of opinion and policy. The Nicks' isolation on the census pages suggests either their inclination or imperative to remain separate. Subsequently, as conditions for blacks deteriorated between 1870 and 1880, the Nicks took advantage of the ambiguity of differing cultural guidelines. They claimed inheritance from Woodfin, excluded Lucy's race on their records, and identified themselves as Indian. The census taker did not contradict their claim. With increasing racial scrutiny in the state and in the nation, their choice offered greater security to every family member.

Like the federal government, North Carolina was escalating its focus on race, moving beyond classification to intervention in the lives of people like the Nicks. The oppressive laws and customs known as Jim Crow were steadily diminishing opportunities available to nonwhites, and protection of white marriage was the first line of defense. The state's long history of laws controlling marriage included a colonial-era statute prohibiting marriage between white men or women and blacks, mulattos, and Indians. Continuing colonial practices, the 1839 Marriage Act banned unions between whites and persons of color to the third generation. In 1869 the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the Marriage Act in the case of an interracial married couple who were convicted of "fornication and adultery" in a "pretended marriage." A separate decision ruled the miscegenation law compatible with the guarantee of equal protection because it applied equally to all racial groups. The 1870 court decreed that state marriage laws applied to every resident of North Carolina.[18]

The court decisions assumed greater prominence the year Arizona was born. North Carolinians ratified the 1875 state constitution to prohibit forever "all marriages between a white person and a negro, or between a white person and a person of negro descent to third generation, inclusive."[19] As a reiteration of the Marriage Act, the amendment provided no new regulation but focused attention on unions between whites and anyone with black ancestry. Like the Marriage Act, it nullified the union of Arizona's parents, John and Laura Nick Swaney, and criminalized her 1908 marriage to a white man. Eleven years after ratification of North Carolina's constitutional sanctions, the Eastern Band aligned with the state and declared that Cherokees were subject to the "laws of the state concerning marriage."[20] The threat of racial oppression hovered over all Cherokees and particularly the Nicks. Along with the racist laws of the state and the Eastern Band, activities beyond the reservation pointed to additional threats.

In the late 1860s North Carolina's Ku Klux Klan unleashed a campaign of violence and harassment against minorities, interracial couples, and Reconstruction politicians. Racial violence grew so extreme that the 1871 Congress initiated a series of investigative hearings. Prominent Asheville attorney Nicholas W. Woodfin testified that Klan chapters existed in the North Carolina mountains where he "had heard of a few murders and of white and colored men being whipped by the Klan."[21] Cherokees who lived elsewhere began moving to Qualla Town to seek safety on the reservation. The Cherokee superintendent, chief, and council urged them to do so "for your sake and the sake of your children." Racial violence and Cherokee emigration continued into the early 1900s, signaling the ongoing uncertainty of Cherokee safety.[22]

Klan membership extended across North Carolina society and included judges who ruled on cases affecting the Cherokees. One such jurist was David Schenck, indicted (but not convicted) for Klan activities in 1871 and elected, as he acknowledged, "by the white men" to the Superior Court in 1874.[23] He served until 1882, making no secret of his hostility to blacks and to interracial unions. The year he retired from the bench, Schenck published an article about the North Carolina Cherokees in the popular magazine *At Home and Abroad*. After providing a brief summary of Cherokee history Schenck assessed what he called the "Purity of the Race." He asserted that there were "only a few mongrels among the Cherokees," that is, "offspring of intercourse with the whites."[24] The Nicks were a different case altogether.

Schenck claimed "the Indians have a great aversion to any intimate intercourse with the negro race." He alleged that only one family in the Eastern Band was "tainted with negro blood," a family he identified as the Nicks. Schenck based his opinion on an encounter he witnessed on the reservation. A Colonel Banner had arrived to select a few Cherokee girls to attend school in nearby Asheville. When the colonel indicated interest in a Nick child, a prominent Cherokee standing nearby signaled that she "had negro blood in her." Schenck noted that "she consequently was not selected" for schooling and attributed the decision to her racial heritage.[25] The child was likely Arizona, the only school-age member of the Nick family in 1882.

While the prejudice of whites like Schenck and some Cherokees undermined Arizona's prospects for schooling in Asheville, the federal government's new Indian policies increased her educational opportunities. In the 1870s the federal government discarded its historic policy of Indian pacification and put in place an aggressive initiative to assimilate Indians into white culture. Federal authorities established boarding and day schools in order to remove Native children from their homes, provide academic instruction, and indoctrinate them with the values of industry and private property. The federal initiative aimed to transform Native children by teaching them "how to live as well as how to read and think." By 1880 more than one hundred day schools operated on various Indian reservations and sixty boarding schools worked beyond them, attempting to remold thousands of Indian children. To get "the largest results" from the federal investment, the Indian commissioner ordered reservation agents to select "the best material" for the boarding schools.[26] Arizona, as a potential candidate for the Asheville school, had already demonstrated her qualifications.

In 1883 the Society of Friends received federal subsidies to open a boarding school and four day schools on the Cherokee reservation, including one in the traditional community of Big Cove where Arizona's family had moved. By

1888 the Big Cove School was teaching twenty-six girls and forty-three boys in a seven-month program of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography, language, drawing, and temperance.[27] Although no enrollment records remain from the school, thirteen-year-old Arizona may have been one of the Big Cove students. Her subsequent academic path indicates that her introduction to federal government instruction had begun by the 1880s, whether in her own neighborhood or at the Cherokee Boarding School in the heart of the reservation.

Alongside the academic curriculum, Indian school regimens enforced sound work habits, erased Native language use, and instilled Christianity. The federal government considered education to be the best agent of change when it included equal portions of labor and academics. Responding to the federal directive "to have farm and domestic work occupy as prominent a place as study," the Cherokee agent stated that his goal for Cherokee students was "to make them good laborers, farmers, and mechanics."[28] The Cherokee Boarding School operated nine months a year and trained girls in "all branches of domestic industry," such as cleaning, laundry work, cooking, and sewing. Morning devotions began the day, and Bible study, additional devotions, moral lessons, and hymn singing took place every evening.[29] When the Quakers surrendered their educational responsibilities to the federal government in 1893, the government's expanded program included corporal punishment, a longer school year, and more manual training. The goal was not to prepare Native children for academic or professional leadership but to make them dutiful and industrious individuals who rejected Native traditions and communal values.

Arizona completed the Cherokee Boarding School program in 1894. The time was propitious, for reservation agent Thomas Potter had determined "to gather together a suitable party of young Indians and escort them to Hampton" in Virginia for further education. He reported his eagerness to "elevate" Cherokees by sending them away from the reservation—"their prison home"—to boarding schools beyond the influence and customs of their families. In the spring of 1894 Potter took ten students by horse and buggy to nearby Whittier and then on by train to the Hampton school.[30] In 1895 Arizona departed with the second group of Cherokees who met the agent's standards of suitability. The journey was as distant symbolically as it was geographically. At the age of twenty, Arizona was leaving home to begin a new life, carrying with her a record of the past. Her Hampton biographical sheet noted her mixed racial and cultural ancestry.[31]

Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the son of American missionaries to Hawaii, had opened Hampton in 1868 as a training school for black men and women. Located on the banks of the Hampton River near Newport News, the school stood near the Virginia headquarters of the Freedman's Bureau and the old

hospital barracks of the Confederate Army of the James. Armstrong later wrote that he "felt the fitness of this historic and strategic spot for a permanent and great educational work." The American Missionary Association had agreed to purchase an adjoining estate for the school, asking Armstrong to assume its administration. "The thing to be done was clear," Armstrong recalled, "to train selected negro youth" who could teach their own people. He determined "to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves" and "to teach them respect for labor." Manual labor, he insisted, "will make them men and women as nothing else will. It is the only way to make them good Christians."[32] Armstrong's educational philosophy had much in common with the federal government's assimilation initiative. Both viewed manual labor and industrial training as essential to the education and acculturation of nonwhites.

Ten years after opening the school, Armstrong expanded Hampton's program to include a small number of Native Americans.[33] Fifteen western Indians arrived in 1878, and by 1893 the number of Natives from across the country had reached the school's limit of 140, about one-fifth of the student population. Approximately one-third of the Native students were girls. Maintaining his original vision of educating freedmen and their children, Armstrong considered his Indian work "illustrative rather than exhaustive."[34] Born a minority among Cherokees, Arizona was now in a minority among blacks, a population not entirely unfamiliar to her.

Native students entered Hampton at different school levels, but all received industrial training as well as academic instruction. Some began in the night school with two-hour classes that followed a full day of manual or industrial labor. Others entered remedial studies and moved gradually to advanced status and the equal division of their school day between class and work. The best students and graduates enrolled in the Normal School for practice teaching and advanced instruction in trade and studies. In these alien surroundings far from home, some Indians could not endure their required three-year terms. Arizona, however, embraced the opportunities and disregarded the oppression of Hampton's program. She arrived, said one teacher, "a shy, indifferent girl" but a "faithful student." A few years later the same teacher recognized her as a prepossessing young woman.[35]

To calm regional, local, and trustee anxieties about interracial contact or conflict, Hampton maintained separate housing and dining facilities and prohibited interracial dating. When practical and possible, however, the school integrated classes, programs, and clubs. Natives from more than sixty tribal cultures lived together in Indian dormitories (Winona for girls, the Wigwam for boys), but their hall supervisors were usually black. Advanced and Normal

School Indian students attended classes, activities, and programs with blacks. The administration and faculty, predominantly New Englanders, were white.[36] The "color" of Hampton resembled Arizona's own multiracial and cross-cultural background. She could identify with the entire school population more readily than most.

Hampton's Indian program differed little from those of white elementary schools but placed greater emphasis on English grammar, speech, and articulation. Since many Native students had never heard English before entering Hampton, the school forced English acquisition by prohibiting Native languages. Before moving to a higher grade, each Indian student was required to pass "a special examination on talking."[37] Such strictures confounded and humiliated many Natives, but Arizona arrived literate and fluent in English. Her upbringing, like her heritage, facilitated transition into Hampton life. She even developed a special bond with white instructor Helen Townsend, "my dear kind Winona house mother," for whom she named her second daughter.[38]

Committed to the Christianization of its wards, Hampton required students to attend chapel services, Sunday school, and church. Native and African American students held joint prayer meetings, studied the Old Testament in history class, and discussed the New Testament in student clubs. Unlike many Hampton Natives, Arizona was at ease with Christianity and familiar with the Bible. Baptists and Methodists had worked among Cherokees for most of the century, and the Eastern Band included Christian converts and a handful of Native preachers. Laura Nick Swaney had named Arizona's older brother Lorenzo Dow after the itinerant Methodist evangelist of the early nineteenth century. It is little surprise that Arizona's Hampton activities included participation in the King's Daughters and the Christian Endeavor Society, two service organizations steeped in Christian rhetoric. Hampton's religious focus nourished Arizona's faith, which she sustained long after returning home.

The school's manual labor program prepared girls for domestic work as homemakers or servants. Identified as "technical education," the program required girls to sweep and to scrub the corridors, teachers' rooms, and public rooms of Winona Hall. They made their own clothing ("at least four cotton dresses a year") and additional dresses that were stored for incoming students. They washed, ironed, and mended their clothes as well as the Winona and Wigwam bedding. In the dining halls they set and cleared tables and washed dishes. To teach cooking and economy, the school divided girls into groups of four and assigned them to a campus cottage for a week at a time. During their assigned week girls shared flour, milk, and fifty cents to make suppers for themselves and for an instructor on four separate evenings. No girl was allowed to graduate un-

til she knew how to cook and sew.[39] Like federal government schools, Hampton trained female students to be efficient housewives and domestic servants.

While Hampton students were integrated during the school term, their summer experiences separated them entirely. Black students, the majority of whom lived in Virginia, might return home during the summer, but Natives, all of whom lived at some distance, did not. Eager to minimize family contact and maximize exposure to white families, Armstrong developed a so-called outing system to place the most promising Indians in New England households for summer work. Approximately thirty students participated in summer outings, boys working as farm laborers and girls as household servants for salaries determined by their employers. Families took student workers into their homes, provided meals and a small allowance, and allowed them a half-day off each week. Their greater responsibility was to present a model of civilized society to Indians. Armstrong promoted outings as "the soundest method of teaching the white man's way." He believed "it is like learning to swim by being thrown in the water."[40] For their part, students were expected to demonstrate the benefits of a Hampton education and attract financial support for the school.

Arizona effectively represented Hampton's program. Intelligent, cooperative, and accustomed to white supervision, she engaged in the summer programs easily and even enthusiastically. In response, her New England employers requested her for subsequent outings. In her first Hampton summer, Arizona traveled to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, to work for Mrs. William A. Nettleton for three and a half months.[41] She returned to the Nettletons the following summer and then went to the neighboring Lincolns in 1897 for her third outing. After Laura Boardman supervised Arizona's fourth outing, fifteen weeks in Newport, Rhode Island, she wrote that "Arizona's conduct was irreproachable and I entertain a real affection for her." The final outing was a four-month stay in West Cornwell, Connecticut, where the Scovilles employed Arizona for general housework.[42] Few Eastern Cherokees experienced comparable travel, exposure, and employment. Few earned money in the cash-poor North Carolina mountains. Perhaps such benefits outweighed the experience of cleaning houses for white families who considered their own culture superior and "civilized."

The affirmation of her employers bears witness to Arizona's temperament and discipline. Living in New England homes far from the Cherokee reservation, she was simultaneously a student, housekeeper, ward, and beneficiary navigating the expectations of whites. Neither the work nor the relationships intimidated her. Arizona's response to assimilation initiatives indicates a growing rather than a diminishing sense of self. Evaluating her West Cornwall summer, she wrote that she respected her employers but did not "learn much of

value." Her work for the Scovilles was "too hard" but otherwise "very satisfactory." She objected to "eating in the kitchen" rather than with the family and considered her own quarters only "fair." Moreover, she asserted that the best thing about the outing was "having [her] own way."[43] The cryptic notations indicate that Arizona had grown far beyond the "shy, indifferent girl" she had once seemed. With increasing sureness she crossed the boundaries meant to contain the "downtrodden and despised races," as Hampton's founder called his students.[44] Her maturing sense of self was wholly in keeping with Cherokee women's customs.

Arizona graduated in 1899 and immediately enrolled in Hampton's Normal School to begin, as she put it, "fitting myself for a teacher." A capable pupil, she had embraced Hampton's goal of training students to elevate and educate their own people. While federal policies emphasized manual labor and work habits, Arizona sought academic opportunities and a teaching career. She wrote to her Hampton sponsor, "It has always been my great desire to be a teacher."[45] Joining fourteen other Normal students, she studied subjects ranging from arithmetic and geography to science and history. The curriculum included practice teaching at the nearby Whittier School for black children and assuming classroom responsibilities alongside another student teacher, who was black.[46] While Natives reportedly shared white America's prejudice against blacks, Arizona moved naturally beyond the boundaries of racial imperatives.

When Arizona acknowledged that her great desire was to teach, she explained to her sponsor that "Indian teachers can get along with their own people better than anyone else."[47] Her comment confirmed her identity as an Indian and challenged the federal government's prevailing assumption that only whites were qualified to teach Natives. The politics of race inevitably determined the vocational opportunities for Indians, including those offered by the federal government. In the early 1900s the Indian Office hired whites to teach academic subjects at Indian schools but placed educated Natives in subordinate school jobs such as housekeeping and laundry work. In the year Arizona was training to become a teacher, however, the federal government revised its Indian education policies in ways that proved beneficial to her. Estelle Reel became Superintendent of Indian Schools and instituted the first standardized curriculum for Native students. The new course of study amended the decades-old policy of eliminating Native customs and authorized, for the first time, instruction in Indian arts. The addition of Native industries to Indian education changed the course of Arizona's life by connecting her to the oldest surviving custom of Cherokee women, the art of weaving baskets. As a result of the new curriculum and Arizona's response to its potential, she became both a teacher and a

basketmaker. The first had been her dream, and the second became her means of fulfilling it.

Eager to introduce Native industries, Hampton invited Arizona to become the school's first Indian arts instructor. She returned home in the summer of 1902 to study basketry and pottery from Cherokee elders. Immersed in their knowledge of plants and dyes, techniques and patterns, and ways of understanding the world, Arizona learned Cherokee traditions in order to join Hampton's staff.[48] She was an educated and experienced twenty-seven-year-old who had absorbed the federal government's assimilation initiatives but was now becoming adept in the customs of Cherokee women.

The arts of the Cherokees had always passed from one generation to the next, from parents to children across centuries of time. Girls learned from their mothers where to dig the soil for pottery, when to collect the plants for dye, how to prepare the stalks and saplings for splits, and then how to weave inherited designs into intricate baskets.[49] Teaching as well as learning required time and patience, repeated trials, and many errors. Arizona's success testifies both to her skill and to the relationships she developed with the Cherokee elders who taught her.

Yet Arizona's immersion in Native arts did not negate her acceptance of assimilation initiatives. She spoke English, professed Christianity, dressed in Victorian clothing, and wore fashionable hairstyles. She wrote articles for the Hampton newspaper and taught lacemaking as well as basketry. As a counterpoint to her absorption of assimilation ideals, however, she now imbibed a very different kind of education. She learned from older Cherokees on her own reservation the things no white person could teach her. As she learned, Arizona became part of the community she had left and fully Cherokee.

With few available markets for baskets, beadwork, or pottery, the number of Cherokee artisans had steadily diminished in the preceding decades. Federal programs and educational initiatives had discouraged Native arts as well as other customs. "There is only one old woman at home who makes real nice baskets," Arizona explained, and "only one man and one woman who can do the double weave," the most complex of all Cherokee basketry. Similarly, she was able to find "only one woman who can make pottery."[50] The near loss of traditions that had once enhanced ecological knowledge, developed technical skills, and signified cultural meaning to Native Americans is a powerful condemnation of the assimilation policies of the federal government and reformers.

Arizona's interest amused, surprised, and eventually inspired those around her. She noted that when she first arrived home, the Cherokees "couldn't understand why I spent so much time on basketry after spending so many years

in school to get an education." Acknowledging that they laughed at her "for wanting to learn" traditional cultural skills, Arizona saw their amusement give way to appreciation as she mastered their ancestral arts. Even those who had never stripped a stalk to prepare a basket split or crushed a handful of roots to make dyes were motivated by her commitment. "After seeing a very pretty basket which I had made," she reported, "they were quite anxious to learn basketry too." She soon surpassed her teacher's abilities so that "even my teacher was anxious to make one as good as mine."[51] With determination and enthusiasm, she became an exceptional student of the oldest surviving Cherokee traditions.

Alongside her expertise as a weaver, Arizona was demonstrating another skill. She was able to recognize the enduring value of Cherokee customs that were being lost. Benefiting from her academic and social education at Hampton and at home in the traditional work of Cherokee women, she considered it essential for students who returned to their reservations "to show an interest in the native industries." Returned students, she insisted, should help tribal elders "keep up these arts and have more pride in them."[52] Arizona had embraced the Hampton objective of learning in order to educate and elevate her own people, but with an important difference. Whereas boarding schools intended their graduates to promote assimilation, Arizona urged them instead to perpetuate their oldest traditions.

Becoming an advocate for Native basketry, Arizona found her own source of pride. Basketry earned for her a particular kind of regard among the Cherokees and gave her a pathway home. Her commitment to Cherokee arts crossed generations, connecting her to those of the past and future. She learned from elders and taught the younger generation, walking miles to and from the Big Cove School, prodding students to perpetuate Native handcrafts. "It seems high time," she asserted, "for some of the younger people to try and do something toward preserving these arts."[53] Preserving the best of the past, she looked to the Cherokee future.

In 1902 Hampton sent Arizona to a conference of elite white citizens committed to the uplift and reform of Native Americans. Journeying to Lake Mohonk in upstate New York, she attended the twentieth annual conference of the Friends of the American Indian, one of many reform groups that had emerged to address injustices to Native Americans. Reformers like the Friends considered Native cultures unacceptable as they were, but malleable under the proper influences. They aligned with religious organizations, educators, and policy makers to elevate Indians from their supposed degraded state to join the "civilized races." Reform groups lobbied Congress, held conferences, passed resolutions, evaluated Native communities, advised presidents, and raised money

to transform Native children through schools and outings.[54] Like the federal government, reformers intended to hasten the absorption of Natives into the mainstream of white culture. They sought the division of Indian lands, the regulation of Indian marriages, and Native adoption of Christianity. Ironically, they also valued traditional Indian arts and encouraged the development of markets for Native crafts.

Hampton's Samuel Chapman Armstrong frequently attended the Lake Mohonk meetings to describe his successful Indian initiative. As the school inaugurated its new course in Native industries, Arizona was singularly appropriate to represent the Hampton program. The 1902 meeting included Estelle Reel, who demonstrated her new Indian curriculum with examples "of different kinds of work done in the Government schools." A representative from the Oneida Indian Reservation exhibited Oneida lacework, and the reformist Mohonk Lodge of Oklahoma brought the beadwork of Indian women and children. With no hint of her own role, Arizona wrote in the school paper that "the Hampton exhibit of baskets was very attractive and interesting, especially those baskets made with Indian designs."[55] She did not try to conceal her pride in the Native tradition she hoped to perpetuate.

The Friends' conferences inevitably included testimonials about personal experiences with Native Americans. When philanthropist Annie Beecher Scoville rose before the assembly to endorse Native arts instruction, she described the change it had brought to her former Hampton pupil. Scoville reported that after leaving Hampton she had found herself in an unspecified "hard place." A friend advised her to send for Arizona, attesting "she is more of a woman than any girl I know, why don't you send for her?" Offering no further information, Scoville recalled that in the months preceding the conference she was again "in need" when a Hampton teacher recommended Arizona. "You'll be alright," the teacher advised, "if you can get her." Scoville delighted in the change she saw in Arizona. Her former pupil had assimilated Cherokee tradition alongside Hampton reform to become "a quiet capable woman, keenly alive to the world about her." Scoville recognized that absorption of Cherokee arts had been regenerative for Arizona and the source of "higher education."[56] Growing into her Cherokee identity, Arizona had earned not only the respect of the Cherokee people but also that of the Hampton teachers who had intended to transform her.

Arizona taught Native arts to Hampton's Indian students for the next four years. "I find that the girls are very fond of it," she said of her basketry classes, "and that they do excellent work."[57] Most summers she returned home to enhance her own special education with Cherokee elders. Still committed to Hampton's philosophy of social and racial uplift, however, she was also pre-

pared to teach and live across racial and geographic barriers. In the summer of 1905 she accepted Charles Shepherd's request to teach "the very poorest class" of black children who worked on his tea plantation near Charleston, South Carolina. Shepherd hired young blacks as field and factory laborers and augmented their work with rudimentary classes.[58] Working under the supervision of a white matron, Arizona taught the children "basketry, lace making, beadwork, chair caning, and rug weaving." She discovered that their parents "did not approve of any form of industrial training" and considered "basketry and rug weaving not at all acceptable." Shepherd's objective, however, was "to enable the children to make money for themselves by making articles to sell to tourists."[59] The goals of Hampton, the federal government, and Indian reformers had converged, and Arizona, having successfully navigated the currents of intervention, expressed no criticism of their implementation.

After moving back to the reservation in 1906, Arizona briefly taught in the Big Cove School. Two years later she wrote Hampton teacher Caroline Andrus that "my name is to be changed in about two weeks [but] the exact date has not been set yet."[60] She was thirty-three years old and stepping over another racial boundary. In a state where miscegenation would soon be a felony, Arizona married Abe Blankenship, a white man who was eight years younger. Abraham Turner Blankenship had moved to North Carolina from Flag Pond, Tennessee, with his parents, Andrew Jackson and Caroline Shelton Blankenship. Tall, slender, and handsome, he had found work as a logger on the reservation, helping clear the forests near Big Cove.[61] Abe and Arizona married in the spring of 1908.

In addition to contravening state and tribal law, Arizona's marriage to Abe traversed Cherokee resistance to whites on the reservation. In the early years of Arizona's marriage, Cherokees and their federal supervisors repeatedly deplored white occupation of the lands held in common by the Cherokees. According to a Big Cove petition to the reservation superintendent, encroaching whites rented land from resident Cherokees and then illegally remained on the reservation without permission from the tribal council. Gradually they assumed possession, shrinking the Cherokees' land base and depriving the Eastern Band of rental revenue. "No one is in favor of whites," the Big Cove petitioners stressed; "please remove all whites that are living on Indian land that have no right or contracts."[62] As an employee of the logging company, Abe's residence may have been a source of resentment, but it was legal. His marriage to Arizona subsequently confirmed his right to reside among the Cherokees. As in other aspects of her life, Arizona had stepped across customary boundaries and social restrictions.

By 1914 Arizona and Abe had four children "all little in a bunch" for whom Ar-

izona became the prevailing influence. Deploring Blankenship's alcohol abuse, the reservation superintendent gave Arizona "a great deal of credit for raising the family in the manner in which they have been reared." He considered her "really quite an intelligent Indian woman," providing as evidence that she "had the opportunity of attending Hampton."[63]

The superintendent accurately gauged the influence of Hampton in Arizona's life. A student and teacher during the most active years of the Indian program, she considered herself "one of Hampton's most faithful daughters."[64] Her continuing affection for the teachers was evident in the numerous letters she wrote them after returning home. "Tell Miss Pratt I will write her," she reminded Helen Townsend, and asked, "where is Mrs. Blakeslee? Give Mrs. Sullivan my love when you see her and don't forget to remember me to Miss Sherman and others, for if I had time I would like to write to every one of them." She also remained committed to the Christian practices that she had shared with other Hampton students. Expressing her continuing hope to be "a light and help to others," she professed that "I feel that I am one of you" in the Christian Endeavor Society and that "I can be just as faithful an endeavorer in my home as anywhere else." She continued to send favorite verses of Biblical scripture to be read at the annual roll call of the society and regularly sent Christmas greetings to the school.[65]

Arizona fully understood the challenges of the Hampton experience and expressed pride in Indians who "had nerve enough to help make their way in school." She wrote her former teachers of her certainty that such effort "will be good for them." In addition to ongoing attempts to recruit other Cherokees for the school, she delighted when her young children "talk and sing about going to Hampton." She wrote Helen Townsend that the children "say they are going to Mamma's school."[66] Regardless of her personal loyalty and the school's recruiting efforts, Arizona was the only member of her family to attend Hampton. As racial tensions and repression increased in the 1900s, Natives resisted going to boarding schools with black students. Congress capitulated to comparable racism and, after considerable debate about the dangers of racial integration, withdrew funding for the Hampton initiative. Without federal subsidies, the school could not afford to educate Native students, and Hampton's Indian department soon closed.

The racism that undermined Hampton's Indian program also infected federal employment policies. After five years as a Hampton teacher and one year as an instructor at Big Cove School, Arizona never again held a full-time teaching position. Reservation schools remained under government supervision, and by 1915 the government's hiring policies excluded Indians with African ancestry.[67]

In November 1915, Hampton's Caroline Andrus asked Indian Commissioner Cato Sells to hire Arizona as a lacemaking instructor at the Cherokee Boarding School. "I would be glad to have you advise me more fully," Sells wrote Andrus, "concerning Mrs. Blankenship's qualifications for this work." No record survives of Andrus's reply, but within the week Sells thanked her "for your courtesy in writing me so fully" regarding Arizona.[68] With an excellent student, outing, and teaching record at Hampton, Arizona was fully qualified for an appointment at the Cherokee Boarding School. Perhaps her ancestry disqualified her, as racist attitudes and policies steadily undercut the purported goals of the government's education program and the reformers' uplift initiatives.

Regardless of the considerable obstacles in her path, Arizona persevered in every initiative she undertook. She sporadically taught at Big Cove School, utilizing what she learned at Hampton Normal to provide rudimentary instruction characteristic of Indian day schools. In addition, she inventoried supplies, notified the reservation superintendent of community illnesses, and provided local children with Christmas gifts she obtained from Hampton's King's Daughters. At the superintendent's request, she boarded the Big Cove schoolteacher in her home, earning extra money while monitoring school activities.[69] She sent her children to the Big Cove School and on to the Cherokee Boarding School, insisting on their reinstatement when Abe abruptly withdrew them. "I have always been sorry they were taken out," she wrote the superintendent. "I think Abe sees his mistake." Reversing school policy to accommodate Arizona, the superintendent reinstated the children. When Big Cove postal employees proved incompetent, she assumed their responsibilities and operated the post office from her home.[70]

Although she lived out her life in an isolated community in the mountains of western North Carolina, Arizona remained connected to a larger world. In addition to providing room and board to schoolteachers, she hosted Hampton recruiters when they visited the reservation. Smithsonian anthropologist James Mooney lived in her home while engaged in pathbreaking fieldwork among Eastern Band members. "He has spent three summers with us," she informed Helen Townsend, "and has had Mrs. Mooney and children down twice." Arizona described Mrs. Mooney as "very, very nice," and the five Mooney children, "ranging from three to thirteen years of age," as "lovely children." Reciprocating her regard, the noted ethnologist started a "Swaney school library" for Arizona to supervise. At Christmas time he sent her a box of "Christmas decorations, toys, dolls, picture books, etc.," for the Big Cove School as well as "a nice collection of story books." According to Arizona, Mooney was "very helpful to the community" where she spent her adult life.[71] His study of Cherokee history

and traditions became a hallmark of ethnology and an invaluable resource to students of Native cultures. While living in Arizona's home, Mooney could see the past, present, and future of the Cherokee people in her multilayered experiences.

Arizona's life illuminates the fiction of racial and cultural categories that were asserted by governing institutions and by the American public. Born with one identity but inheriting and raised with others, she united a multiracial, cross-cultural heritage in a deeply segregated time and place. She overcame local prejudice, Jim Crow practices, government programs, and cultural interventions, taking advantage of the peculiar opportunities embedded in the reform and assimilation initiatives. Discrimination policies aimed to reinforce her racial identity while reform programs aspired to erase her cultural inheritance. Neither intended for her to become Cherokee. Becoming a Cherokee of the present rather than of the past, she moved beyond the racial intent of existing laws and the cultural goals of changing policies. She embraced opportunities that lay at the margins of the categories she literally embodied. Her life offers an ironic commentary on all that was intended to define and circumscribe her.

Arizona died in her Big Cove home on March 11, 1934, at the age of fifty-nine. Her obituary in the Cherokee newspaper called her "one of the highly esteemed and honorable citizens of the Reservation" whose "work and achievements among her people will long be remembered." Perhaps the greater tribute was the presence of Cherokee elders who lined the road in respect as a wagon carried her coffin to the family burial ground.[72] Although her final entry in the federal census classified her as "mixed blood" and one-eighth Cherokee, she had transcended such false categories and boundaries. Her imprint on Cherokee life remains evident among many descendants, some of whom bear her name, and in the customs of Native art that she helped revive and perpetuate. The story of Arizona Nick Swaney Blankenship interweaves one woman's responses to the strands of injustice and oppression embedded in cultural intervention and racial discrimination. It is a tapestry of a life lived fully, an expression of the challenges and possibilities for one woman in a particular time and place, and an enduring inspiration for all who follow after.

NOTES

1. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871); James Lander, *Lincoln and Darwin: Shared Visions of Race, Science, and Religion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 280–81.

2. Edward Lurie, "Louis Agassiz and the Races of Man," *Isis* 45, no. 3 (September 1954): 227–42;

Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839); Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Mankind," *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 2 (1870): 404–12; Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation* (London: H. S. King, 1880).

3. Louis Agassiz to A. G. Howe, August 9 and 10, 1863, in Elizabeth Cabot Cary Agassiz, ed., *Louis Agassiz, His Life and Correspondence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 211, 212.

4. Paul Lombardo, ed., *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

5. "Instructions to Assistant Marshalls," *Ninth U. S. Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870), 10.

6. *Ninth U. S. Census*, 25.

7. Ibid. A total of thirty-six African Americans lived in Qualla Town, most as field laborers for white households.

8. The 1872 Indian commissioner reported a total of seventeen hundred Eastern Cherokees, including those in surrounding states: *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1872* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 25.

9. "Instructions to Enumerators," *Tenth U.S. Census*, in Steven Ruggles et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), 5.

10. Ruggles et al., *Tenth U.S. Census*, 10. By 1880 Jackson County had been divided and Qualla Town was in the new county of Swain.

11. In *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Glenda Gilmore points out that emancipation and congressional reconstruction inspired optimism among and offered opportunities to African American women. Lucy Nick's isolation from other African American women would likely have been a countervailing force.

12. See Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

13. William G. McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser Jr., "The Cherokee Censuses of 1809, 1825, and 1835" in William G. McLoughlin, Walter H. Conser Jr., and Virginia Duffy McLoughlin, *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789–1861* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 215–50.

14. *Laws of the Cherokee Nation Adopted by the Council at Various Periods* (Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation: Cherokee Advocate Offices, 1852), 3, 57.

15. Ibid., 37–39, 120; "Constitution of the Cherokee Nation" in ibid., 5. See also Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Fay Yarborough, "Legislating Women's Sexuality: Cherokee Marriage Laws in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 2 (2004): 385–406.

16. Article 3, "Treaty with the Cherokee, 1819," in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2:178.

17. Henry P. Carrington, "Eastern Band of Cherokees of North Carolina," in Thomas Donaldson, *Extra Census Bulletin, Indians, Eastern Band of Cherokees of North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Printing Office, 1892), 18–19.

18. *State v. Hairston*, 63 N.C., 451 (1869); *State v. Reinhardt*, 63 N.C., 547 (1869); *State v. Tachanahtah*, 64 N.C., 614–18 (1870).

19. *Amendments to the Constitution of North Carolina 1875* (Raleigh: Josiah Turner, 1875), 27.

20. "Tribal Council Minutes," October 11, 1886, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, microfilm, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, N.C.

21. "Ku Klux in the Mountains," *Old North State*, August 18, 1871, 2. Nothing has emerged to explain the overlapping names of prominent white attorney Nicholas Woodfin and Woodfin Nick, his contemporary who was Arizona's grandfather. Arizona stated on a 1907 Indian enrollment form that her maternal grandfather was named Nick Screaming Bear (Ne-ge-yah-nah-ah-ne-ya-ca): Arizona Swaney application, no. 26890, June 29, 1907, Court of Claims, Eastern Cherokees, copy courtesy of Bob Blankenship, Cherokee, N.C. I am grateful to Bob Blankenship for sharing his grandmother's student records and letters obtained from the Hampton University Archives as well as family photographs, enrollment records, and personal memories.

22. T. W. Potter to D. Murphy, November 2, 1894, Record Group 75, General Records Correspondence, Subject, box 2, National Archives Records Administration, Morrow, Ga. (hereafter NARA); Author interview with Myrtle Jenkins, February 8, 1989, notes in author's possession.

23. David Schenck Diary, folder 9, vol. 8, David Schenck Papers, no. 652, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 13; Mark Jones and John Wertheimer, "Pinkney and Sarah Ross: The Legal Journey of an Ex-slave and His Wife on the Carolina Borderlands during Reconstruction," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 103, no. 4 (2002): 325–50, 335.

24. David Schenck, "The Cherokees in North Carolina," *At Home and Abroad* 2, no. 5 (1882), North Carolina Collection, the Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 321, 324.

25. Schenck, "Cherokees in North Carolina," 324–25.

26. *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1880* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), ix.

27. Barnabas Hobbs Report, "Minutes of North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends" (Greensboro, N. C: Thomas Brothers, 1888), Friends Historical Collection, Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C., 35–37. I am grateful to Archivist Gwen Gosney Erickson of the Friends Historical Collection at Guilford College for providing me with copies of annual reports.

28. *Report of the Commissioner for 1880*, v; Thomas Potter, Annual Report, June 6, 1894, Record Group 75, Cherokee Agency, Series 1, box 1, NARA (hereafter cited as RG 75, CA, box #).

29. Potter Annual Report, 1894, RG 75, CA, box 1, NARA.

30. Thomas Potter to Superintendent, January 8, 1894, RG 75, CA, box 2, NARA.

31. Jon L. Brudvig, ed. and comp., "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institutes, American Indian Students, 1878–1923," 1994, 1996, http://www.twofrog.com/hamptonfem2.txt (accessed May 19, 2013).

32. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, "From the Beginning," in *Twenty-Two Years' Work of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute at Hampton, Virginia* (Hampton: Normal School Press, 1893), 6.

33. Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877–1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 18–22.

34. Armstrong, "From the Beginning," 9.

35. *Proceedings of the Twentieth Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian* (New York: Lake Mohonk Conference, 1903), 130.

36. David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 326; Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute*, 137.

37. "Indian School," *Southern Workman and Hampton School Record* 22, no. 6 (1893): 95.

38. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to Helen Townsend, January 22, 1913, and January 24, 1917, Hampton University Archives, courtesy of Bob Blankenship (hereafter HU/BB).

39. *Southern Workman*, 1893, 96, 102.

40. *Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Annual Report* (Hampton, Va.: Normal School Steam Press Print, 1888), 12; Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute*, 37.

41. Swaney student records, HU/BB.

42. Ibid.; Mrs. B. G. Boardman Report to Hampton Institute and Arizona Swaney to Mrs. Mitchell, c. 1899, both in HU/BB.

43. Swaney student records, HU/BB.

44. *Hampton Annual Report*, 1888, 5.

45. Swaney to Mitchell, HU/BB.

46. Ibid.; *Southern Workman*, 1893, 102.

47. Swaney to Mitchell, HU/BB.

48. Arizona Swaney, "Basket Making," *Indian Friend*, undated, Newspaper clipping file, HU.

49. See Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

50. Swaney, "Basket Making."

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. National organizations included, among others, the Indian Rights Association (1882), Friends of the Indian (1882), Women's National Indian Association (1879), Indian Industries League (1895), Sequoyah League (1902), and the American Indian League (1910).

55. Arizona Swaney, "The Mohonk Conference," *Indian Friend*, 1902, Newspaper clipping File, HU.

56. *Proceedings of the Twentieth Lake Mohonk Conference*, 130.

57. Ibid.

58. Pinehurst (Dorcester County, S.C.) Records, 1892–1911, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

59. Arizona Swaney, "Teaching Basketry on a Tea Plantation," *Indian's Friend*, 1906, Newspaper clipping file, HU.

60. Arizona Swaney to [Caroline Andrus], April 29, 1908, HU.

61. Bob Blankenship, personal communication.

62. D. Climbingbear, William W. Long, and John W. Wolfe to James Henderson, June 4, 1915, RG 75, CA, box 9, NARA.

63. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to Caroline Andrus, November 3, 1914, HU/BB; James Henderson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 22, 1930, RG 75, CA, box 1, NARA.

64. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to Dr. Frissell, April 28, 1909, HU/BB.

65. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to Helen Townsend, January 22, 1913, and January 24, 1917, HU/BB.

66. Blankenship to Townsend, January 22, 1913, HU/BB.

67. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute*, 208.

68. Cato Sells to Caroline Andrus, November 1 and 6, 1915, RG 75, CA, box 1, NARA.

69. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to James Henderson, September 12 and 21, 1917, and February 27, 1919, RG 75, CA, box 3, NARA; Blankenship to Mr. Adams, September 16, 1929, RG 75, CA, Box 27, NARA; Blankenship to Caroline Andrus, November 3, 1914, HU/BB.

70. It is possible Abe withdrew the children in objection to the school's discipline. He had pro-

tested the previous year that one of their sons had been beaten with a belt for an offense he did not commit: A. T. Blankenship to Superintendent, March 27, 1921, RG 75, CA, box 13, NARA; Arizona Swaney Blankenship to James Henderson, September 5, 1922, RG 75, CA, Box 5, NARA; To the Honorable Postmaster General from [blank], November 7, 1922, RG 75, CA, Box 15, NARA; Bob Blankenship, personal communication to author, April 18, 2011.

71. Arizona Swaney Blankenship to Helen Townsend, January 22, 1913, HU/BB.

72. *Smoky Mountain Indian Trail* 1, no. 8 (March 21, 1934): 1; Bob Blankenship, personal communication to author, April 18, 2011.

Samantha Biddix Bumgarner

Country Music Pioneer

ROBERT HUNT FERGUSON

In early August 1936 a young Harvard student, aspiring folksinger, and four-string banjo player named Pete Seeger made the long drive from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Asheville, North Carolina. His destination was the eighth annual Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, organized each year by the amateur folklorist Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Lunsford's festival was one of a small but growing list of folk festivals held throughout the South. At this festival, Seeger was enthralled by a bespectacled woman in a rocking chair plucking the banjo. The woman played the five-string banjo with such dexterity that Seeger resolved to imitate her, deserting his four-string banjo forever. Within two years, Seeger had dropped out of Harvard to pursue his dream of being a folksinger. He would later go on to record some of the most beloved songs in American folk and pop music, while countless aspiring musicians learned how to play the five-string banjo through his popular instructional books. Though Seeger often credited Bascom Lamar Lunsford's festival with inspiring him to learn the five-string banjo, it was the woman in the rocking chair, colloquially known to adoring crowds as "Aunt Samantha," who first captivated Seeger.[1]

Samantha Biddix Bumgarner, who often performed under the name "Aunt Samantha," was a country music pioneer. Bumgarner recorded for Columbia Records in 1924, becoming the first female string-band musician to make a recording for a major music label. Her New York City trip took her far from her home in Jackson County, North Carolina, where she had resided since the 1880s. Aside from traveling for music performances, Bumgarner lived most of her life near Sylva—a small mountain community in southern Appalachia.

Despite her influential role in opening up recorded country music to future women, little is known about Bumgarner's personal life, especially her early

SAMANTHA BIDDIX BUMGARNER PERFORMING AT FESTIVAL, DATE UNKNOWN

Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection, Southern Appalachian Archives, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, N.C.

years. Few interviews were conducted with her, and she serves mainly as a footnote in country music recording history. The few snippets of her life that survive in the historical record are questionable in their veracity, further complicating the construction of an accurate picture of this influential musician. Like many Americans who gained nominal and fleeting fame in the first half of the twentieth century, locals repeated stories about Bumgarner, sometimes stretching reality. Throughout her life and after her death, folklorists and journalists passed down well-worn stories about Bumgarner and her music, sometimes reflecting myths over truth. But like many musicians of her day, Bumgarner never seemed to mind tales invented on her behalf and may even have participated in their creation and proliferation. Still, what we do know about her, and what we think we know, reveals much about life for women in North Carolina who bucked tradition and operated under traditional gender roles while navigating a rapidly modernizing society.

This essay considers the gender barriers Bumgarner faced in the male-dominated early country music industry. It also considers how Bumgarner, as a woman from western North Carolina, both produced and challenged images of hillbilly life that popular audiences consumed along with the growing popularity of country music in the 1920s and 1930s. By recording for a major record label far from home and by often performing at folk festivals, Bumgarner defied stereotypical notions that dictated southern Appalachian string-band music as a rough world made up of even rougher men. It is significant that fans, fellow musicians, and advertisements often referred to her as "Aunt Samantha." The nickname suggested that a familial title transformed Bumgarner into someone who did not threaten strict gender roles of the time, while making the southern Appalachian musician seem more "hillbilly" to appease her audience. Additionally, Bumgarner's music, often described as "quaint," sometimes led the listening public to make inaccurate assumptions about Bumgarner's home region—western North Carolina. Instead of the backward or time-honored region that listeners imagined from her songs, southern Appalachian residents were actually grappling with the dual strains of tradition and modernity in their daily lives—as evidenced by the important yet limited nature of Bumgarner's musical career.

In the early 1900s, southern Appalachia became a destination for many writers, missionaries, and educators seeking to document, "modernize," or "uplift" people in the region. Local-color writers produced extravagant stories of life in the southern Appalachians, often portraying the people as ignorant and violent. With this view in mind, many northern and eastern church missionaries and school educators traveled to the Appalachian Mountains in states such

as Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina. When these evangelists and pedagogues moved into their new Appalachian communities, many saw local cultural customs as a preservation of Anglo-Saxon civilization thought lost to time.

Bound up in late nineteenth-century ideas of white supremacy, the interpretation that southern Appalachian whites were "contemporary ancestors"—serving as passages to a simpler, homogenous past—gained popular currency. The "folk arts" boom compelled people like Olive Dame Campbell, a wealthy and highly educated Massachusetts folklorist who established the John C. Campbell Folk School in western North Carolina, to preserve mountain handicraft traditions. Campbell and other "song catchers" placed emphasis on "collecting" songs and ballads found in the hills of southern Appalachia. Folklorists such as Cecil Sharp—at the invitation of Campbell—came to North Carolina to record and transcribe thousands of mountain ballads, many of which he believed had origins in Great Britain. Often, though, these folklorists passed over what they deemed "nontraditional" mountain songs, including tunes played on instruments such as the banjo, fiddle, and guitar. The folk festivals that burgeoned in the 1920s were part response to the fame that ballad collectors garnered for the region and part reaction to folklorists' exclusion of string-band songs popular among southern Appalachian musicians. It was in this world of sudden national attention and nostalgic longing for an invented past in which Samantha Bumgarner came of age.[2]

Sarah Samantha Biddix was born in Tennessee around 1878 and moved with her family to Haywood County, North Carolina, around the time of her first birthday. Later in life, she often misrepresented her birth date and age, variously reporting to census takers that she was born in 1881 or 1884, though her death certificate notes that her birthday was October 30, 1878. Not long after arriving in North Carolina, the whole family moved to neighboring Jackson County, near Sylva, North Carolina.[3]

Her father, Haselton Biddix, was a farmer and fiddle player who Samantha bragged could make his instrument "croon like a loving woman." As a young girl, Samantha coveted her father's fiddle, but he would not allow her to play it. Often referred to as "the devil's box," the fiddle was associated with drinking, carousing, and general amoral activity. When her father was out of the house, however, she took down his fiddle and secretly taught herself how to play. Realizing her love for music, however, Samantha's father encouraged her to play the banjo and, like many southern Appalachian residents who used the resources around them, she made her first banjo from a gourd, cat hide, and sewing thread. While still a girl, her father bought her a manufactured banjo,

and the daughter and father duo began performing informally for family and friends. "I used to go with him," Bumgarner remembered, "and play around over the country."[4]

The Sylva of Bumgarner's childhood was a town experiencing profound change. In the mid-1880s, the Western North Carolina Railroad pierced the Balsam Mountain Range and connected Sylva to points east, including major industry centers in the North Carolina piedmont. The railroad led to increased timber production in western North Carolina. As timber companies swallowed up more and more land, subsistence farmers either joined lumber crews or followed the railroad east and south into mill towns like Gastonia, Winston-Salem, Reidsville, and Durham.

The railroad, however, did not merely take people and resources away from western North Carolina, it also brought itinerant laborers who followed lumber camps all over the South. These lumbermen, both black and white, carried songs and music with them. During their time off, laborers sang and played music together, teaching each other new versions of old songs. The railroad brought musicians from all over the South into western North Carolina and contributed to the innovation of string-band music. Even as a farmer, Haselton Biddix encountered many musicians who traveled to western North Carolina to work in the timber industry. In lumber camps, drink houses, boardinghouses, and in front of country stores, Biddix may have played his fiddle with musicians who hailed from all over the region. When he came home, he taught those songs to Samantha.

Around 1900 Samantha Biddix married Carson S. Bumgarner, whom she called "Carse." He gave Samantha a fiddle as a gift, and she began performing publicly with it and her banjo. However, she and her husband lost most of their possessions, including her banjo and fiddle, when their home burned to the ground in the early 1900s. Not long after, Bumgarner was able to purchase a "ten-cent banjo," and with this new but cheaply made instrument, she entered her first banjo contest at a fiddler's convention near Sylva. "I tell you, I was so nervous I didn't know I was hitting the strings," Bumgarner remembered. "But I won the contest and I been winnin' 'em ever since." The banjo contest marked the beginning of Bumgarner's musical career. For the next two decades, she played mostly at fiddlers' conventions and festivals in southern Appalachia. Occasionally she performed with her father, but by the 1920s, Haselton Biddix had grown too ill to perform and travel. He died in 1930.[5]

In the 1920s Bumgarner's music gained national attention. In April 1924 Bumgarner and her friend and occasional musical partner Eva Smathers Davis, also from western North Carolina, walked into the Columbia Phonograph

Company (now Columbia Records) in New York City and waited while the Fisk Jubilee Singers finished their last song in the recording booth. When it was their turn, Bumgarner and Davis kicked off their session with "Cindy in the Meadows," an upbeat string-band number that was different from the spirituals performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In all, the two women recorded twelve sides while in New York. Over the course of two days, Bumgarner and Davis became the first women country music recording artists. The exact details of how Bumgarner went from local fiddling contests to a New York studio, like much of Bumgarner's life, is lost to history. Because major recording companies at the time targeted southern musicians, Bumgarner's recording experience was shared by many southerners. Scores of southern Appalachian musicians recorded for major record labels after 1923. Yet Bumgarner was unique among these numerous "hillbilly" recording artists. Recording female string-band musicians was a novelty at the time and opened the door for hundreds of women to follow her into the recording studio.[6]

Throughout most of the 1920s A&R (artist and repertoire) employees of Okeh, Victor, Columbia, and other major recording companies fanned out across the South with recording equipment and enthusiastic invitations for musicians to visit their northern studios. Recording southern blacks for "race" records and southern whites for "hillbilly" records, A&R representatives brought southern string-band music to the masses. After spending days recording musicians in places like Atlanta, Bristol, and Charlotte, the recordings were pressed in New York and paired with advertisings that boosted the songs as sprouting from rustic mountain settings, sung by generations of hillbillies.[7]

Folklorist Charles Wolfe attributes Bumgarner's invitation to record for Columbia to her success at fiddlers' conventions and old-time music festivals, both popular from the 1910s through the 1930s all over the South. One of the most popular gatherings was the Georgia Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention held each year in Atlanta. The convention attracted a "broad cross section of white Atlantans" and other white southerners. Similar to the ways northern record companies advertised hillbilly records as a window into the past, boosters for the Atlanta convention promoted their event with promises of mountain musicians trekking down from the backwoods of Appalachia, bestowing their time-honored traditions on the city dwellers. These advertisements were also reflections of early twentieth-century white anxieties about race and modernization. As one historian put it, urban white southerners believed that "mountaineers preserved the genes, culture, and values of the nation's Anglo-Saxon pioneers." Samantha Bumgarner, perhaps unwittingly, became a representative of the hardy mountain stock who populated music festivals around the country before World War II.[8]

As early as 1927, and possibly before, Bumgarner was a featured performer at the popular Georgia Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention, and she began playing at Asheville's Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in 1928, the festival's inaugural year. The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival began as a sideshow of Asheville's popular Rhododendron Festival, but the festival's creator, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, knew that live mountain music would attract huge crowds. By 1930 Lunsford's music festival had its own date and venue and proved more popular than the Rhododendron celebration. Each year, due in large part to the popularity of musicians like Bumgarner, the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival attracted thousands of revelers from all over the country. For the next thirty-one years, until the year before her death, she continued to play the banjo, fiddle, and guitar at festivals around the country, gaining the reputation as a virtuoso and "triple-threat."[9]

Though the recording industry provided Bumgarner with additional opportunities to spread her music, perhaps no technological advancement was more important to the increased popularity of Bumgarner's music than the radio. Beginning in the 1920s, radios became ubiquitous in North Carolina homes, and country music radio in particular became wildly popular. Residents in insular communities like those in western North Carolina ordered radios from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. A few weeks later, their new radios arrived on the Western North Carolina Railroad. In 1924 Sylva residents no longer had to wait several weeks for their orders to arrive by train. That year local merchant D. E. Murray opened the Murray Radio Company in downtown Sylva. His business did so well that he opened a second storefront in nearby Bryson City.[10]

Country music radio stations thrived in the 1920s and 1930s. Nashville radio station WSM hosted one of the country's first radio adaptations of a barn dance, featuring country musicians playing hillbilly music. The popular WSM show was later rechristened the *Grand Ole Opry*. In the mid 1930s, Charlotte's radio station WBT began hosting a similar show called the *Crazy Barn Dance*, sponsored by a laxative business called the Crazy Water Crystals Company. WBT's popular show attracted country bands from all over the Southeast to play in its live theater. Nightly, residents of western North Carolina tuned in to WBT to hear the latest craze in country music. Western North Carolina's own WWNC also featured mountain music programming, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford credited the station with creating excitement about his Mountain Dance and Folk Festival. "Since the mountain music has been quite popular over radio station WWNC," Lunsford reported to the *Asheville Citizen*, "a number of letters have been received by the station officials in connection with mountain [music] programs" and his festival.[11]

While the radio offered entertainment in the comfort of one's own living

room, it was this new device that took Bumgarner well beyond the confines of Jackson County, North Carolina. In the early 1930s, Dr. John R. Brinkley asked her to perform for his "border radio" station in Del Rio, Texas. Brinkley's radio station was unique. Also a native of western North Carolina, Brinkley was universally known as a quack doctor because of his promotions of an operation that inserted goat glands into men suffering from erectile dysfunction. Brinkley moved from North Carolina to Texas to evade charges of tax evasion and to promote his goat-gland operation over the airwaves. In Texas, Brinkley built a powerful radio station that broadcast at nearly one million watts—twenty times more powerful than Nashville's WSM station—where popular musicians of the day, such as the Carter Family, reached a wide audience. For several years, Bumgarner was a regular on the show along with teenager Harry Cagle, another western North Carolina musician.[12]

Having no children of her own, Bumgarner took Cagle under her wing. Later in life, Cagle described his relationship with Bumgarner much as Samantha had described her relationship with her father. Cagle recalled that he played with Bumgarner from an early age and that he learned how to play the fiddle by watching her handle the instrument with skill. When they played music together, she usually played the fiddle and he, the banjo. Whenever he could, though, he snuck a few tunes on Bumgarner's fiddle. Cagle and Bumgarner only played together on Brinkley's station for a few years. In the late 1930s, pressure from the federal government forced Brinkley to shut down his radio station.[13]

Throughout the remaining two decades of her life, Bumgarner's music drew crowds and admirers. In the 1940s, she was invited to play at the White House for Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt and their guests, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Bumgarner also recorded several more times during the folk music revival of the 1950s. In August 1955 *Life* magazine published an article about the folk music revival titled "Strummin' Up a Banjo Boom" that documented how the banjo was making a comeback in popular music. On the last page of the article, an elderly Samantha Bumgarner was pictured plucking the banjo on her front porch swing. The caption read "loyal octogenarian" even though Bumgarner was only in her seventies at the time. Near the end of her life, she often told visitors and reporters she was well into her eighties, though since her death certificate stated she was born on October 30, 1878, she would have been no older than seventy-eight in 1955. On Christmas Eve, 1960, eighty-three-year-old Samantha Biddix Bumgarner passed away from heart disease at her home near Sylva, North Carolina. She had also suffered from severe arthritis that made it nearly impossible to play her instruments in the last year of her life.[14]

Recording companies packaged Bumgarner and others in ways that made them appealing to the listening public. Descriptions of southern musicians rarely reflected reality. Beginning with her recordings for Columbia, Bumgarner was often presented as an old-fashioned motherly figure who possessed an innate ability to play "hillbilly" music because of her perceived Anglo-Saxon birthright. Immediately after recording Eva Davis and Bumgarner, Columbia began advertising their songs by attaching the phrases "discoveries from North Carolina" and "hillbilly." By doing so, Columbia portrayed their music as an artifact to be dusted off and venerated after years of languishing in obscurity. Yet as historians have recently pointed out, the music that Bumgarner, Davis, and their contemporaries performed was a reflection of a rapidly modernizing world. In the mountains, men and machinery penetrated insular communities with the coming of the railroad. Piedmont textile magnates streamed into the hills in search of laborers. Mountain residents no longer able to make a living as subsistence farmers followed family members into the mills. Addressing issues pertinent to the 1920s, early country musicians like Bumgarner were as popular with urban and mill-town dwellers as with their neighbors in the mountains. While northerners or city folk may have imagined bucolic scenes when listening to their music, mountain musicians drove cars and purchased radios, which allowed them to widen their performing repertoires. Mechanization and modes of transportation exploded in the years before and during country music's early success, giving musicians opportunities to expose wider audiences to their craft. Early country musicians also wrote songs about a world facing rapid changes. Bumgarner and Eva Davis recorded a version of the song "John Hardy," a lament about a railroad worker who murders a man over a craps game. Like Piedmont country musician Dorsey Dixon, Bumgarner often composed songs addressing tragic events set in motion by modernity, collecting newspaper stories about murders and turning many of them into songs. Observers heard these songs as chronicles of "strange and tragic happenings in the mountains," but Bumgarner likely lamented tragedy without attaching strange or gothic meaning to it.[15]

Even twenty years after the first "hillbilly" recordings, misperceptions of mountain musicians prevailed among the listening public. In 1944 the *New York Times* proclaimed that Asheville's Mountain Dance and Folk Festival combined "the best of Anglo-Saxon folk songs and ballads" with popular music. The article also boasted of a participant in the hog- and turkey-calling contests who "claims to have killed sixty-four bears" in western North Carolina.[16]

Outsiders were not the only ones responsible for heaping antiquated monikers on Bumgarner and her fellow musicians. Sometimes musicians constructed

well-honed stage personas that played up the view that all early country musicians were from the hills. One of the most famous "hillbilly" recording artists was Fiddlin' John Carson, who often told audiences and record company representatives that he was from the mountains. As historian Patrick Huber points out, Carson was a thoroughly modern resident of metropolitan Atlanta, incorporating elements of Broadway, vaudeville, and Tin Pan Alley in his repertoire. Still, on stage, Carson hawked his rural background.[17]

Samantha Bumgarner did not seem to embrace outlandish and fictitious performances like Carson. Though her dresses were often homemade, they were always pretty, and she was always neatly kept. She often wore her long hair neatly in a bun. She won over crowds by her superb musicianship, not by acting like caricatures of her Appalachian friends and neighbors. Bumgarner's songs do not reveal a "hillbilly" artist seeking to cash in on a degrading image of her home region. Playful songs like "Big-Eyed Rabbit" were joyous and humorous but did not poke fun at western North Carolinians. Bumgarner preferred to perform songs about hard living, much like the early blues "race records" African Americans recorded for companies like Columbia. Songs like "Georgia Blues," "Worried Blues," and "Last Gold Dollar," the last of which Bumgarner wrote, reflected a sophisticated woman who was concerned with a world that extended far beyond her front porch. Far from provincial, Bumgarner embraced her worldly understanding through her music. Bumgarner did, however, embrace her "Aunt" nickname. Perhaps this was the extent of her willingness to bow to certain quaint notions about southern musicians.

Even local writers portrayed Bumgarner in quaint terms. Western North Carolina journalist John Parris became the de facto expert on Bumgarner after her passing. Though early in his career Parris reported for newspapers in Raleigh, New York, and London, he chose to return to his home in western North Carolina to write a column for the *Asheville Citizen-Times* called "Roaming the Mountains." In the manner of local-color writers who depicted an isolated Appalachia with wonderful and curious traditions, Parris embellished his columns with grandiose and nostalgic claims. Since his column's purpose was to shed light on the colorful people who lived in western North Carolina, he wrote extensively about Bumgarner, often referring to her in familiar terms. By calling her "Samanthy," Parris imbued Bumgarner with an old-fashioned and informal air. In a column titled "The Fiddlin' Ballad-Woman," Parris wrote about Bumgarner with sweeping, sentimental words. "The cry of her fiddle and the twang of her banjo," concluded Parris, "were known wherever music-makin' folks gathered." In the obituary Parris wrote on Bumgarner, he furthered myths about the musician by proclaiming her "the last of the old time balladeers" and

said "her head was so full of ballads that she could keep right on playing forever and never play the same tune twice." For journalists like Parris, Bumgarner's music was bucolic; it reflected the perceived simple life she lived in the southern hills.[18]

Bumgarner's distinctly southern Appalachian public image also had to be reconciled with her gender. Historian Bill C. Malone points out that many southern women played musical instruments at home, but the atmosphere of the times dictated that the realm of old-time music, particularly when it was played publicly, was mostly a man's world. Cultural mores dictated that women were often seen as promiscuous or immoral if they performed old-time music publicly without a male bandleader. Steeped in this cultural prejudice, men also decided who was invited to record and perform at festivals, which meant they often excluded women. Malone asserts that men were also reluctant to compete against women in contests or perform with them at barn dances because they simply did not believe that female musicians were worthy of public performances. According to Malone, however, Bumgarner was a notable exception. Folklorist Michael Ann Williams agrees that Bumgarner defied the "stereotypical notion that instrumental music in the region was a man's art form." Her kind demeanor and grandmotherly manner made male performers feel safe to share the stage with her. Her record of winning contests also forced many men to respect her as a musician. Bumgarner's relative acceptance made her distinctive among female country musicians in the 1920s.[19]

For many years, Bumgarner was the exception to the rule that said string-band music was a man's world. Still, female band members were supposed to fit certain motherly roles. As a woman from the southern Appalachians, Bumgarner was often expected to fit conventional and gender-appropriate roles—roles she seemed to accept. It is likely Bumgarner's widely adopted nickname, "Aunt Samantha," was given to her by other musicians as a way to uphold gender roles and allow her to compete in a predominately male realm without threatening her fellow pickers. The moniker "aunt" both familiarized the person and transformed her, not into someone who threatened the strict roles and morals of the time, but rather someone who could easily be a member of one's own family. Aside from the gendered aspect of the moniker, Bumgarner may have been given this quaint nickname to reinforce her image as a "hillbilly" musician. Names like "Uncle Dave Macon" and "Mother Maybelle Carter" support both the hillbilly and gender-role hypotheses.

Still, Bumgarner was able to pursue her musical career outside the home by traveling to festivals all over the country. Like many women in southern Appalachia, Bumgarner contributed to the household income. In 1910 she listed

her occupation as a dressmaker and worked from the confines of the home she shared with her husband. The same year, her husband listed his occupation as "odd jobs," but by 1920 he was the foreman at the pulpwood paper plant in Sylva. Given that the Bumgarners had no children of their own to support, Carson's foreman position may have provided enough income to allow Samantha to pursue her musical aspirations. After Carson's death, Samantha was able to make a modest living from her public performances.[20]

Throughout her life, Samantha Bumgarner was a favorite at folk festivals and fiddling conventions, yet she never attained the popularity or esteem that many of her male contemporaries received. Fiddlin' John Carson and Charlie Poole were celebrated by generations of musicians for their innovative and pathbreaking recordings. Yet female performers rarely received the same level of fame. Until the late 1930s, opportunities for female country musicians were limited. Two notable exceptions were Maybelle Carter, who went by "Mother Maybelle," and Kate Carson, known as "Moonshine Kate" on recordings. These two pioneering women in country music traveled and recorded extensively, to a much greater degree than Bumgarner. One reason for their widespread success may be that both women were always accompanied by men on their recordings and tours. Except for Bumgarner, the few successful women who were elevated by their recordings in the 1920s were led by male bandleaders—often members of their own families. A. P. Carter and Fiddlin' John Carson were known as shrewd promoters of their music and their musical families. Paternalistic booking agents, theater owners, and festival organizers made it difficult for female performers to play shows without the accompaniment of a male. Bumgarner did not have a male counterpart with whom she could perform. As a result, unlike the peripatetic career of fellow North Carolina musician Charlie Poole, Bumgarner did not embark on extensive tours and destructive rambling. Though Bumgarner and Eva Davis paved the way for women to record popular string-band music in 1924, it took more than ten years after their Columbia releases for an all-female southern string band—Lily Mae Ledford's Coon Creek Girls—to work its way into the national touring circuits.

During her long musical career, Bumgarner negotiated the opposing forces of tradition and modernity. She was entrenched in a culture that fostered independent women while still maintaining strict gender roles. She was a trailblazer in country music, a world that also circumscribed the ways in which women could participate. "Aunt Samantha," who wore homemade dresses and acted as a mother figure for aspiring musicians, was also the woman who disobeyed her father and defied gender norms in learning the fiddle, traveled all over the

country playing for working-class fans and presidents alike, and could outplay many of the men with whom she shared stages.

Samantha Biddix Bumgarner was at once unique and representative of North Carolina women in the first half of the twentieth century. Her brief but important recordings and her extensive travels to perform music for crowds all over the country made her distinct from most women of her era and region. Bumgarner paved the way for country music superstars who came after her—Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, and Dolly Parton to name only a few of the best known. Just as important, however, was how Samantha Biddix Bumgarner also typified North Carolina women. Countless women living in North Carolina in the first half of the twentieth century supplemented their family's income by working from home and, in their spare time, played music on a regular basis. Bumgarner, like other North Carolina women, confronted a modernizing state with a mixture of awe and anxiety. Like all women living in small-town North Carolina, Bumgarner negotiated the dual worlds of tradition and modernity. These women used a variety of ways to navigate this terrain. Bumgarner, like others, updated and adapted her music to make sense of the changing world.

NOTES

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13. Ibid., 356–57, 474–81.

14. "Aunt Samantha, First Woman to Record Country Music, Was Known as 'Fiddling Ballad Woman of Mountains,'" *Sylva Herald*, February 22, 2001; "Strummin' Up a Banjo Boom: The Discarded Instrument Plinks and Plunks It's Way Back to Favor," *Life*, August 15, 1955, 108.

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